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**MUSSOLINI**  
**RED AND BLACK**



# MUSSOLINI

## RED AND BLACK

By

ARMANDO BORGHI

*with an Epilogue*

HITLER: MUSSOLINI'S DISCIPLE

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## DEDICATION

*I wish to dedicate this book to the ineffaceable memory  
of a woman—my wife*

**VIRGILIA d'ANDREA**

*Who struggled with unshaken courage against  
Fascism—*

*Who saw our house in Milan burned on a sombre night  
of March 1921, by the Black Shirts—*

*Who died young in New York in May 1933, certainly  
a victim of the anguish of exile—*

*Who never weakened in the face of danger—*

*Who left a treasure of poetry exalting liberty and  
cursing tyranny.*

A. B.

## NOTE

THE name of Armando Borghi is better known on the Continent and in the U.S.A. than in England, yet no one is better qualified than he to write of Mussolini. Not only was he in close touch with Mussolini in the years immediately preceding the War, but he also played an active part in the history of Italian Socialism, notably as General Secretary of the Syndicalist Union. This left-wing workers' organization was founded in 1912 and before the War already numbered 100,000 members. Later its membership increased to 500,000, and it was as one of its most influential leaders that Borghi, together with Malatesta, was arrested at the time of the armed occupation of the factories in October 1920. He was acquitted the following year but, as a result of the triumph of Fascism, he was obliged to flee the country and has since lived in exile.

Armando Borghi is the author of several other books on social questions, written both before and after the War. The present one is a translation of *Mussolini en Chemise*, published in Paris in 1932, which the author has revised and to which he has added new material, and an epilogue--*Hitler: Mussolini's Disciple*.

## CHAPTER I

### PREAMBLE

IN the following pages I have but one concern, the truth. To describe the life of Mussolini I shall rely essentially on facts and documents.

I shall efface myself as much as possible in order to leave the word to him, to his partisans, his henchmen and his historians.

I am writing a guide for the man in the street, for the man who wishes to see Mussolini in his true light.

I ask to be forgiven if sometimes the anger aroused by delving in all this muck wrings from me a cry of indignation. I have had to reassemble scattered material, evoke forgotten episodes, summarize documents lost or little known, for Fascism has tried to banish them, even from public libraries.

The former Socialist bully, risen directly from the public-house to the supreme spheres of the Lord's anointed, has felt the need of burying that near past when he was the giant-killer of capitalist society. To attain that end he has tricked himself out in a complete set of carnival costumes: crosses, pendants, swords of honour, Field-Marshal's baton; stars, plumes, spangles, rewards for his so-called heroism in the War; pompous liveries, operatic uniforms

—never forgetting the cuirass that protects his precious person.

That is the way to transform the frog of the fable into the savage bull.

In every country they have outdone themselves to load him with noble titles and honourable distinctions, to make him worthy of the company of his peers. Princes, courts, universities, and even the Church, have overwhelmed this arrivist-adventurer with platitudes.

In Rome, Alphonso XIII, presenting Primo de Rivera to Victor Emmanuel III, could find no greater praise to give him than to say: 'Here is my Mussolini.'

The Pope has called him 'the envoy of Providence.'

The Bolsheviks have paid him honours on many occasions.

The former braggart of Socialism has seen human dignity disappear from his horizon to give place to servility.

This was always merely a façade. There is indeed a far distance between the sentiments which the partisans of Mussolini advertise and the thoughts which they really hold: in fact, all that surrounds him is like him—venal, calculated, low and vile, no matter which way one turns; whether it be toward the mercenaries of hack journalism intoxicated by the sudden and unforeseen triumph of their new patron; or toward those floating bladders who are symbols of the glory and the officially cultivated genius of the Black Shirts; or if it be finally toward that crew of vagrant

monkeys who occupy the place of honour in the ranks of traitors to Italian liberty—the court of Rome.

Everywhere we find nothing but corruption, treachery and baseness.

We are going to undress the demi-god whom the prudent Farinacci hopes that he has already pushed into the realm of myth. Let us look at him naked. Let us clarify the mind of the poor man who swallows greedily the broth of heroism cooked and re-cooked in the style of d'Annunzio. The world falls into two camps as to the ideal of Italian Fascism. Mussolini himself proclaimed this before his valets in the 'grey and hollow amphitheatre of Montecitorio.'\* We shall see if there is in truth only one ideal, and if it is possible that it will make a great day for Italy. One thing is certain, that world opinion is divided in its judgment concerning this caricature of Cagliostro which is Mussolini.

I want to help people to know and admire him just as he is, quite naked, in all his ignominy. I realize that many do not want to know the truth; that many prefer to forge a Mussolini to their own convenience, for their personal use; that others again see in him the champion of a universal reaction. His apologists have doubtless also hoped to apply to him the maxim of Napoleon, who said that one must attribute to men the attributes one desires them to have.

There are plenty of others, nevertheless, who have illusions about him. And plenty who are convinced. There are also some who are convinced through

\* The Chamber of Deputies at Rome.

stupidity, or because they have the incurable habit of adoring their own image in the 'man of miracles.'

There is finally the organized lie, to the detriment of everyone. An entanglement of facts, a juggling of dates, an inversion of the logic of cause and effect, a shameless and cynical forgery have been practised for years, and have been swollen immoderately by means of a Press, thanks to which anything can be said; by means of a religion through which anyone can be fettered; and by means of infernal expedients which make it possible to corrupt, falsify, contaminate and traduce everything: for money is not lacking, nor up to the present, money-lenders.

I am going to examine our hero then, in all his aspects and I shall treat successively of the following questions:

Who is Mussolini? Where does he come from? What are his different political phases? In what sense was he a Socialist? How did he disown Socialism? How did he ally himself with military politics? How did he make war? What was his militant action after the War? Did he save Italy from revolution? How, when, in what way? Should he be classed among the heroes or the scoundrels, the charlatans or the idealists, the audacious or the swindlers, the zealots or the criminals?

## CHAPTER II

### HIS ORIGINS—HIS PERSONALITY

*His Exile—Deserter Accused of Theft—Vagabond—  
Demagogue.*

ROMAGNA . . .

The Sicily of Central Italy! The people are rude, good, open-hearted, noisy, generous, and find a mad pleasure in kicking at established hierarchy.

Romagna . . . (is this nostalgia in me, a Romagnard, for my own church bells?) . . . a country which brings to men a generous compensation for their hardships, and which is rendered picturesque by their healthy life of labour. Plains, rich in villages and little towns, which touch each other and yet seem so distant one from the other, because of the nuances of their dialects. Cities rich in historic and artistic memories: Forli, Rimini, Ferrara, Ravenna, Bologna . . .

Romagna of our fathers . . . Where it was a moral reproach to be 'without party.' Up to 1874, either Papists or Republicans. Then Internationalism appeared. Later the two Internationalisms: Marx and Bakunin.

Romagna of our youth: a wide sowing of subversive ideas. Untrimmed beards in the manner of the carbonari, caps in the style of Garibaldi, big Cipriani hats, flamboyant cravats black and red; parties, clubs, breathless discussions on Mazzini and on Marx, on



Costa and on Malatesta; types of Sans-culottes and Jacobins; songs of the barricades and refrains popular among priest-devourers. Men of whom you had only to ask their lives to defend liberty and they would never refuse you. . . . Outside the walls, a hundred metres away, the peasants; the sordid and indifferent farmer, slave of the illusion that he is master of the earth, whose hedge limits his horizon; slave of the priest, with a hundred Madonnas round his neck, in the stable, in the grange, in the cellar, to protect his beasts and his harvests; robust men, good for making police during their military service, and carriers of baldaquins in parish festivals.

Such was Romagna in that period when an old blacksmith, Alessandro Mussolini of Predappio, a little village of the region of Forli, was imprisoned for the Socialist cause. It is Mussolini himself who recalls him in his talks with Emil Ludwig: 'We had scarcely two rooms,' he said, 'scarcely any meat. *But there were passionate discussions.*' It is I who *italicize*, because it is from these discussions, punished to-day by the Special Tribunal, that he pretends to have drawn his vigour of mind and his character.

And he adds: 'When my father died a thousand comrades of the party followed his coffin.'

It does not seem to me that Ludwig asked him how many years of prison it would cost a thousand Socialists to-day to accompany to the grave such a man as his father?

The father?

The son?

Research into paternity is forbidden!

Let us now see in what way. . . .



Let us see how Providence has 'initiated' its chosen one. Mussolini is a Romagnard. Son of a Socialist, he became a Socialist himself. At twenty years of age he made part of that group of young people who conducted a great propaganda at Forli, made fun of Republicans, treated Mazzini like a bourgeois, swore only by Marx, Costa and Ferri, distributed tracts, devoured books and journals to arm themselves with ideas, and to have always the last word in all discussions.

At twenty the young Romagnard disappeared. He emigrated. His apologists explain that he was pushed to it by a desire for adventures, a desire to see the world. The fact is that he crossed the Swiss border exactly at the moment of his military service. (What is more, he will not return to Italy of his own free will, he will be well and truly thrown out of Switzerland. Yet he will stay there long enough to be declared seditious.)

He will show himself to be what he is during these years of youth, which are usually the most fertile in heroism and in strong and generous passions. And one is obliged to conclude that our super-patriot of to-day has no resemblance to . . . let us say Jeanne d'Arc.

Here again Providence has favoured him. In Switzerland Mussolini wanted to be of the Reddest. He pushed people to extremism. He excommunicated the sluggards of his party. He looked over, one by one, the centres of emigration: centres of honest and industrious poverty which for long years made an

annexed colony of the Italian revolutionary movement. A sort of purgatory where one was always under the threat of expulsion, but where the propagandist was received like an oracle by his comrades.

How many are there to-day, who, scattered throughout the world, recounting how they became revolutionists, recall the first time they heard the voice of one who has now become the hired tool of Imperialist circles? How many workmen are there who received him like a brother into their poor houses, with that affection which comes from the heart, full of gratitude for the truths they learned and for the little bit of light entering into their consciousness?

How many are there who made him sit down at their tables, who introduced him into their intimate lives, who asked his advice as to what books to read and what their children should read, and their wives: who shared with him the little bread they had and gave him their beds—and who perished later, they and their sons and their wives, victims of his brutish soldiers? How many others, wasting away in his prisons or wandering through the world, have remained faithful to the ideal which he taught them, and which he denied and betrayed through venality?

\*

Toward 1902 Mussolini began to give trouble to the Swiss police.

There was also at this period the beginning of proceedings against him for illegal appropriation: the theft of a watch from a friend who had taken him into his home. The friend, however, wished to save him from the scandal of a trial. I would not speak of this 'gossip' if Mussolini's newspaper, the *Popolo*

*d'Italia* had not discussed it in 1924, naturally to contradict it—a contradiction accompanied by an avalanche of threats against his vile slanderers, who as it happened were merely men of the upper class, ardent monarchists. As for example, the senator Albertini, director and owner of the most conservative of papers, the *Corriere della Sera* of Milan. The efforts spent in Switzerland by Fascist emissaries to eradicate every trace of this famous case are, it seems, considerable.

\*

Mussolini was expelled for the first time from the Canton of Berne (June 1903) after a strike of masons which he had provoked.

He himself illumines his part in the agitation in a letter sent to Bertoni, for the Anarchist paper, *Le Réveil* of Geneva. Mussolini attacks and recriminates his comrades in these terms:

‘Those who showed the most fear among the Italians—excited it is said by your speech—were the venerable pontiffs of the committee of action for the workers. I will prove it to you by the following fact: The organized workers wished to have a parade of protest and solidarity. Through scruple and delicacy we went, a comrade and I, to carry the result of our deliberation to these gentlemen of the committee of action. Received at the central office of their organization, we disclosed the reason for our visit and invited them to persuade the somnolent working class of Berne to participate in our parade.

‘We were badly received . . .

‘They treated us like outlaws, like fomentors of

disorder, like traitors compromising the interests of the workers. When I announced our intention of going through with the parade whatever the cost, if the Italian workers responded to our call, then these ambitious Red pontiffs warned us that they would do their utmost to prevent us. They even led us to understand that in an extremity they would have recourse to the authorities. At length having taken account of their declarations, and trembling with rage, we left that den of reactionaries.'

Later on Mussolini was also expelled from the Canton of Geneva.

The event excited public feeling. It is here that we can reveal the opinion held of him by those whom he was later on to pass in the social hierarchy.

In its session of May 11, 1904, the Grand Council of Geneva discussed the interpellation made by the Socialist deputy, Wiss, concerning his expulsion. This attracted particular attention, because from Geneva Mussolini had been sent officially to Chiasso, the Italian frontier, where they feared that in violation of international conventions governing delinquents he would be handed over to the Italian Government. (That, however, would not have done him any great harm, compared to what Mussolini would do to us to-day if he could get us into his hands.)

It was M. Odier, Minister of State, who replied to the questioner. After an examination of the law which governed expulsions, he developed his argument as follows:

'Mussolini presented himself the 9th of March at the Alien's Registration Office to ask for an

authorization of residence. He supported his application with a certificate of matriculation in French in which it is mentioned that he had made use of a passport. The clerk advised him that this was insufficient; then Mussolini decided to present a passport which at first seemed regular. It carried the date of December 31, 1905; but on closer examination it was evident that it had undergone a modification, and that in reality a three had been changed to a five.'

The minister continued, explaining that, having accorded a permit of residence to Mussolini, they had asked for information from the Italian consul at Bellinzona and that he had confirmed the fact that it was a matter of a false passport. April 9, Mussolini, having presented himself to recover his papers, was arrested. Interrogated, he replied:

'I acknowledge that the date 1903 has been altered to 1905, but I am not the author of this forgery. I acknowledge, nevertheless that I have made use of it knowing that it was a falsified passport.'

The minister then made these comments:

'Mussolini was a school teacher in Italy; he is occupied now with Socialist revolutionary propaganda. He was arrested in 1902, at Lausanne, for vagrancy; at Berne, in 1903, for political delinquency. Held until June 19 and expelled from the Canton of Berne, he was pointed out to us by the federal authorities as an Anarchist. I believe nevertheless that he protests against the term of *anarchist*, and contents himself with that

of Socialist revolutionary. It is in fact in that capacity that he presented himself to us.\*

\*

The life of Mussolini, in the years which follow his expulsion from Switzerland, is of mediocre interest.

We find him again at Trent, serving his journalistic apprenticeship in company with Cesare Battisti on the paper *Il Popolo*. There again the apologists of Mussolini try to augur favourably for the patriotic sentiments of the future Duce, because he made much of Battisti's fate as a martyr; a consequence of Battisti's sincere Irredentism of long standing—Irredentism that did not wait to reveal itself under cover of polemics born of the disorder of the War.

We call attention to the fact that if Mussolini had entered into the Irredentist views of Battisti, he would not have been, during all the period when he was a Socialist, the implacable enemy of the Republicans and of the Socialist Freemasons, Irredentists pre-eminently; and he would not have remained deaf, at the beginning of hostilities, to Battisti's urgent entreaties to promote the entry of Italy into the War.†

After having abandoned *Il Popolo* where he proved his divine 'predestination' by publishing in supplement a light little romance, 'The Daughter of the Cardinal,' directed against the priests, Mussolini applied himself to teaching. Yet his professorship,

\* Extract from the minutes of the Grand Council of Geneva, session of May 11, 1904.

† Besides, *Il Popolo* was not a journal of ideas. Here is what Valera writes about it: 'It was a journal of events rather than of politics. In the Austrian territory politics created many vexations for those occupied with them.' Paul Valera, *Mussolini*, Folla Publishing Co., Milan, 1924.

which amounted to a licensed degree for teaching the French language, never went beyond the staffs of the primary school. It was not with that that he could make a fortune.

At Tolmezzo, in Carnia, and in several villages of the province of Mantua he left a reputation for arrogance, drunkenness and boastfulness.

Mussolini gives us the impression at this moment of a man morally unemployed and uncentred.

He had a culture made by hook or by crook, borrowed and superficial, a morbid need of publicity, and a tiresome tendency toward pose and paradox.

Professor Berneri writes:

‘On his table he always had Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Stirner. His megalomania led him to consider himself a superman. Atavistically, already he aspired more to power than to conquest. Considering himself as an exceptional being, he thought he had the right to fame and fortune. He declared to his friend Nanni that he had met in Italy few men who could compare with him.’\*

\* Study of Mussolini, appearing in *Germinal*, numbers 2, 5, 9, 1927. Chicago Post Box 1305.



## CHAPTER III

### HIS 'APOLOGIES'

#### *Ten Years of Subversive Propaganda.*

It would be difficult for a simple workman or an intellectual vagrant, provided with the following police record, to find work permitting him to earn an honest living:

*April 10, 1904, deported as a refractory.*

*April 15, 1904, arrested at Geneva for having falsified a passport.*

*July 22, 1908, condemned by the Tribunal at Forli to three months of prison and two hundred liras fine for armed threats.*

*September 10, 1908, condemned by the Pretura of Meldola to one hundred liras fine for having held a meeting without authorization.*

*November 10, 1909, imprisoned for ten days for not having paid said fine.*

*October 10, 1911, arrested at Forli following a manifestation against the expedition to Tripoli.*

*November 23, 1911, condemned by the Tribunal of Forli to five months of confinement for delinquency against public order.*

*April 1, 1914, acquitted by the Court of Assizes at Milan of the double accusation of provocation of soldiers to disobedience and of insulting the army.*

There is a record of subversive service belonging to a future Minister of War and of the Marine, a

General of Militia, etc., . . . not to mention a future Dictator of Italy, and beyond that, a restorer of order, of morale and of the Papal throne.

Therefore let us sift out the principal causes of these condemnations.

It was toward 1910 that the 'Red' fame of Mussolini went beyond the narrow circle of Romagna.

He fulminated against the Reformists of his party.

It was at Forlì that he began the publication of his weekly, *Lotta di Classe*; and at this period I was to meet him for the first time. In the neighbouring village (at Voltana) in the course of one of the frequent scuffles between Republicans and Socialists, a Socialist had been killed. I went there on a newspaper inquiry. At Forlì I met Mussolini. He gave me the impression of being a sincere Socialist. In talking to me he maintained the most uncompromising language against the Republicans. It was apparently an affair of Union rivalries between workmen, but these rivalries masked in reality the electoral competitions of various leaders.

At this period, too, in order to corroborate his propaganda, he translated from the French text, *The Great Revolution and Words of a Revolutionary* by Peter Kropotkin—a translation made to the order of Bertoni of Geneva. *Lotta di Classe* became the rallying centre of that category of Marxian Socialists who do not accept the logical consequences of parliamentarism, of ministerialism, and who claim that their final aim is always the social revolution.

But Mussolini was not always in accord with his comrades. He was subject to a disordered ideology. The fermentation of his brain pushed him toward a

form of violence which seemed to relate him to terrorist Anarchism.

There were during this period three typical terrorist attacks. Mussolini's commentaries on them are interesting to us.

One recalls the famous bomb of the Colon Theatre at Buenos Aires. There were numerous victims. The Anarchists themselves did not dare to assume the moral responsibility for the attack. They talked of police provocation.

Here is what Mussolini wrote about the event in *Lotta di Classe*, July 9, 1910:

'I admit without argument that bombs in normal times should not constitute a means of Socialist action; but when a Republican or Monarchist government flouts you or places you on the margin, beyond law and humanity, it is not necessary to pour out imprecations against a violence which is but a response to another violence, even if it causes some innocent victims. I find that a lot of Socialists are too frequently moved by the misfortunes of the bourgeoisie, while at the same time they remain impassive to those of the proletariat. Moreover, when it is a question of some imbecile nobody of the bourgeoisie, vowed to the Devil, or of the fine and perfumed skin of the little ladies of the aristocracy, one sees numerous Socialists spilling all the tears they are physically capable of . . .

'The pieces of a machine mean more to the capitalist than do the limbs of a workman. The speculator juggles with the misfortunes of collective humanity, and it makes little difference to him that his acts sow the road with victims.

'Thiers never had any pity for the partisans of the Commune of Paris. Bava Beccaris swept with machine-guns the streets of Milan. Alphonso XIII had no pity for Ferrer. Yet on the other hand one sees Socialists moved by the victims of the Colon Theatre at Buenos Aires . . .

'Death is not a proletarian. This one-sided sensibility of the Socialists shows to what extent Christianity is still alive in our souls. It is Christianity that has given us this morbid, hysterical and effeminate pity.'

Mussolini's prose is spiced for Socialist gullets. A certain 'G.M.' sent to *Lotta di Classe* a letter disapproving of Mussolini. The latter published it with comment in the number of July 16. He said among other things:

' . . . At the Colon Theatre all the attendants of that famous gala evening represented the reactionary government. The one who threw the bomb, is he a vile character because he lost himself in the crowd? Felix Orsini, did he not also attempt to hide himself? And the Russian terrorists, do they not try to avoid arrest after striking their blows? Are they heroes and madmen at the same time, those who commit an individual act? They are nearly always heroes, almost never madmen. Insane, an Angiolillo? Insane, a Bresci? Insane, a Sofia Perovskaia? . . . Emphatically no! Their behaviour wrung columns of admiration even from bourgeois journalists of great prestige, like Rastignac. To judge these men and their acts, we should not place ourselves at the level of bourgeois and police mentality.

‘And we, who are Socialists, in any event, should not throw stones at them. On the contrary, let us recognize that individual acts also have their value, and that sometimes they mark the dawn of profound social transformations.’

Another occurrence, a sort of anticipation of action in the Bonnot manner, took place in London. Mussolini this time made his comments in a Lugano journal,\* directed by Paolo Orano, who passed from Syndicalism in the style of Sorel, to Fascism, also by the road of Nationalism.

Mussolini wrote:

‘. . . No, the tragedy cannot be measured by the yardstick of current morality: were they then criminals, the men who stayed to be burned in the house in Sidney Street? Certainly one cannot confuse them, in the cage of assizes,(†) with the brute who, in a moment of alcoholic delirium plants a knife in the belly of his drinking companion. Were they thieves? Not even that: they did not steal for fun or for debauchery. They wore the same clothes to the moment they were hung; they lived in a garret in the most miserable quarter of the metropolis. They were in fact Anarchists. Yes, Anarchists, but in the elastic sense of the word. They hated work, because physical work (one must have the courage to proclaim it once and for all) brutalizes man instead of ennobling him; they hated property because it made irremediable the antagonism between individual and individual; they hated life, and above

\* *Pagine Libere*, 5th year, No. 1, January 1, 1911.

† In Italy the prisoners accused of a crime are placed in a cage during trial. (Translator's note.)

all, the society which they denied and wished to destroy.

'This palingenetic Anarchism explains the tragedy of London. Also only the Russians could be its protagonists. It is only in Russia that there still exist Christians and Anarchists in one.'

You will note the scorn of Christianity which he proclaims in the first article and the apology which he makes for it in the second. There is Mussolini one hundred per cent.

Already at this period, he had brought to his contradictions that unconstraint and that unconsciousness which came from his lack of a solid philosophic basis, and that boastful presumption which caused him to trifle with paradox.

Let us speak now of the third apology we have announced. It concerns one of those attacks which Mussolini to-day has solid personal reasons to fear, but which at that period he exalted for political reasons.

The victim was the Russian minister, Stolypin. Listen:

'The nemesis of justice struck him dead. So be it! Stolypin (ignoble, sinister and sanguinary) has deserved his fate. The Russia of the proletarians is in festival and awaits the day when dynamite shall pulverize the bones of the Little Father, whose hands are red with blood. The tragic end of Nicholas II will be the dawn of a new period of revolutionary action. We hope for it steadfastly. While awaiting it, glory to the man who has accomplished the sacred gesture of the avenger.'\*

\* *Lotta di Classe*, September 23, 1911.

One recognizes the psychological (not to say psychopathic) treasure found by the valets of intellectualism in the service of the Duce. He has not changed: extremist he was, extremist he is.

For them the difference between what they wish to tear down and what they wish to build up does not enter into account, the moment the renegade has enlisted their services. But would they apply the same argument to a man, who, having been a great killer of enemy soldiers during a war, should display the same ardour, once home again, in killing the members of his own family?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PURSUIT OF THE REFORMISTS

*Rapacious political pacifist—From Forli to Milan—  
Advocate of Regicide.*

WE are now concerned with Tripoli, 'Bel sol d'Amore' as the song goes.

Desertions are beginning in the Socialist party. For many the words 'Socialists' and 'Tripolitans' were not contradictory: Socialism has to be the result of capitalist maturity, they said; it is capital which has to fertilize a world insufficiently developed, etc.

Such was the thesis of Labriola, Bissolati, Bonomi and their associates. They preached it courageously and braved disfavour on account of it. If we believe the boot-lickers of Fascist journalism, Mussolini himself was a 'Tripolitan.' He was not against the war, but was against the way it was being carried on—too gentle a way, they report him as thinking. The buffoons who tell these stories must be grossly well paid for their effrontery. In any event it is known that Mussolini was condemned to five months of prison for his public protests against the war. Do the boot-lickers in question, then, confess that in time of war, when the entire country is engaged in an effort that will lead to victory, any citizen whatsoever has the right to impose his particular fashion of con-



ducting war through rallying the people in public places?

If that is their attitude, then shame on their patriotism 'à la Hervé.' . . . Mussolini rose up, not against this war, or the manner of making war, but clearly against the principle of war, in the name of anti-patriotism. 'He incited the young men,' writes Valera, who admired him, 'not to respond to the orders which called them to the barracks, preparatory to going to Lybia to massacre the natives.'\*

No one riddled the Tripolitan Socialists with writings so violent as Mussolini's.

Valera, in the same book, makes a resumé of what Mussolini published in *La Folla* of Milan against the 'Tripolitans.'

Here is a compliment addressed to Paolo Orano:

'The Hervéist Orano is rehabilitated: he is now reciting his act of contrition, and confiding it to the columns of *Corriere della Sera*, which in 1898 was the most active news organ in the service of the murdering General. Paolo Orano finds the 'Italian-Turkish war beautiful, good, clarifying, and almost sacred.'

'Paolo Orano feels the need of lending himself to the diapason of this barbarous Italian Nationalism, in order to 'extol that martial Italy, that army, which in a paroxysm more powerful than life or death makes the august brow of Rome shine again'; and in order to marvel at this army 'more splendid and grander than any of the improvised armies of revolutionary movements.' Paolo Orano swallows back, with the easy grimace of the experienced comedian, all he has said and

\* Book already cited, page 174.

written during fifteen years of subversive activity. And he intones a hymn to the glory of the murderer's sword.

'I am not shocked by it. I expected it of him.'\*

Does it not seem to you that Mussolini is speaking of himself in anticipation?

Next he attacks Tomasso Monicelli. See how he foreshadows himself exactly as he will be later on:

'Monicelli also goes in for 'war to the finish.' He also becomes very thoughtful. Soon he will prove himself prince of newsmongers. What then has become of Monicelli, the revolutionary and Hervéist? He is volatilized. Cartilaginous spines like his do not resist the shocks of Socialist crises. . . . The banks of the Rubicon swarm with men who want to sell themselves. Display then in the market of consciences these 'want ads,' so that the buyers can make their choice. They will find there every category, every age, every origin: Heralds, blow your trumpets, it is the liquidation of the season's end—consciences and tissues are elastic.'†

Mussolini's fame had not yet gone out of Romagna. At Forli, where he lived, grave popular riots against the war took place. The mob rushed on the station, pulled up the rails and prevented the departure of soldiers.

The same tactics had been employed in 1896 against the African expedition of Crispi; Mussolini was among the demonstrators and excited them. For this reason he was arrested. We have already noted

\* Book already cited, page 174.

† Valera, book already cited, pages 176-177.

this in his court record. It is now that Pietro Nenni, at that time a Republican, afterwards a Socialist, and to-day one of the chiefs of the anti-Fascist party in Paris, landed in the Bologna prison, together with Mussolini. More than once in his biographical writings on the present Duce, he has told how the latter wept perpetually over the sad fate reserved for him. What upset him most of all was that he was too young to be eligible for probation. He had a terrible fear of paying with several years in jail. He escaped, on the contrary, with only a few months of prison—he, who to-day for a word, even for a suspicious silence, distributes tens of years to his political enemies, or ex-friends, often indeed ex-Blackshirts who have not followed him to the end of his crimes. That is what happened, for example, to Cesare Rossi.

The moment is now approaching when the national reputation of our hero was about to burst into bloom. The Socialist party was on the point of dying at the hands of the Reformists. The war could continue, thanks to recruits. We are at the congress of the Socialist party at Reggio Emilia (July 7, 8, 9, 10, 1912). Mussolini was there. His federation was in order, having complied with the necessary formalities for union with the party.

It is a slaughter of the Reformists. But the Radicals have no leaders. Ferri is a puppet, Lazzari is old, and Serrati unpopular. Mussolini appears to be the one man for the situation.

It is the moment when the labour forces are going to the Left. Anarchism is prospering among the workers; Syndicalism also. A Socialist extremism alone

can save appearances for parliamentary government, and rally the electoral body to the party.

*L'Avanti*, the Socialist daily, passed then from the hands of Bissolati into those of Mussolini. Later on he explained his attitude in *l'Avanti*:

‘The party wished to free itself of the monarchist aberration represented by Leonida Bissolati, just as in 1892 and in 1906 it was freed of the Anarchist and Syndicalist aberrations.’\*

I quote from the minutes of the congress these words which cannot be expunged from Mussolini's biography:

‘The 14th of March [it is Mussolini speaking], a Roman mason fired his revolver at Victor of Savoy. Precedent indicated the line of conduct to be followed by Socialists. The spectacle offered by revolutionary Italy on the day after Bresci's assault at Monza had been harshly criticized. There exists a book which you can accept with certain reserves, *The Story of Ten Years* by Labriola, where you will see that the ruling classes of Austro-Hungary knew how to receive with complete dignity the news of the tragic death of Elizabeth. One had a right to hope not to see again, ten years afterwards, the incredible spectacle of labour exchanges raising the flag at half-mast veiled in black; of Socialist municipalities sending telegrams of condolence and congratulation; of all Democratic and Revolutionary Italy prostrating itself at a given moment before the throne. . . .

‘Why be moved and weep before the king,—

\* Valera, book already cited.

merely for the king? Why this hysterical, excessive sensibility over crowned heads? What is a king anyway, if not by definition the useless citizen? There are peoples who have sent their king packing; others even have preferred to take the precaution of sending him to the guillotine, and those peoples are in the vanguard of progress. For Socialists, an attack belongs to history or to the newspapers, according to circumstances. Socialists cannot afford to associate themselves with mourning, with prayers, or with festivals belonging to monarchy.'

Such was the lesson of Socialist unity and of anti-monarchism from this very complete Barrabas, who now fills the office of Roman emperor. Here in conclusion was the order of the day:

'The congress in referring to the acts of the deputies, Bonomi, Bissolati and Cabrini, following the attack of March 14, decides to expel from the party the said deputies, as well as the Honourable Podrecca for his attitude in favour of war.'

From this moment on, Mussolini was the leading star of the Socialist party. The war had incited, but it had also galvanized, the proletariat; for they had fought against the war. An era of extremism was opening.

In the workers' world we assist now at a resumption of extensive strikes. Of these the industrial strikes were the most important. Milan was the centre of these social agitations. In *l'Avanti* Mussolini encouraged all extremist movements. He manœuvred tactfully between the Confederation of Labour

(Reformist) and the Syndical Union (direct action). He did not always satisfy his comrades. Particularly they reproached him for an excessive extremism—extremism, if one believes the chief choristers of Fascism, which would furnish them with a good pretext to try and get rid of him.

At this time there took place in Milan a big general strike. Corridoni, who was directing it, was arrested, together with other militants. I was called to Milan with Rossoni, who as it turned out is now grand-vizier of the 'corporations.' We arrived together in Milan, and began by paying a visit to Mussolini at the quarters of *l'Avanti*. He blamed the attitude of those of his comrades who were officials in the General Confederation of Labour (he took care, however, to defend them in his paper). He furnished us with a correspondent's card for the paper *l'Avanti*, to permit us to circulate in the town, which was in a state of siege. He incited us to action.

The next day Rossoni and I were arrested.

Rossoni got out of it very well! We were in two adjoining cells, we could hear each other's voices through the wall. The third day Rossoni did not answer any more. Had he been transferred to another cell? Or was there no ground for prosecution?

That was not the case. The order for arrest, and the accusation which hung over him, held good; but some days afterward, I received a card from Rossoni from London: he had been freed. How had that happened? He explained to me that there had been a mistake in identity through a similarity of names. They had freed him in place of some other Rossoni.

At the time this explanation was accepted. Is it

still acceptable to-day? Or is it possible that the rascal was in league with the police from that time on?



Mussolini devoted himself to the study of the French theorists.

He knew Sorel, yet without being one of his partisans. At that time indeed, every self-respecting militant Italian had to know the French political literature. Hervé was translated, also Pelloutier and Yvetot; Lagardelle was very well known through his review *The Socialist Movement*; Pouget, James Guillaume were read and admired.

Mussolini gave his time to the translation of a book that Charles Albert had written on some new conceptions of Socialism, at the period when the latter was seeking to set up an intermediary party between Socialism and Anarchism.

In the preface Mussolini makes the following reservations, which permit us to understand his way of interpreting Marxism at this time:

‘We scarcely need say that we do not share all the ideas of the author, and to be more explicit, we will add that the critical part of the book is that which seems to us the least developed, the least studied, and the least conclusive. The criticism of the fundamental laws of Marxism which, according to Charles Albert, still dominate all Socialist parties, is too superficial. First, we must not forget that these famous fundamental laws, being relative in character, cannot be interpreted to the letter like dogmas. Then the fact that there are diverse social categories, forming a kind of connective tissue for human

collectivity, does not at all weaken the existence of the two classes which may be called fundamental: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, in periods of crisis, the intermediary classes are drawn, according to their interests and ideologies, toward one or the other of the fundamental classes. The situation and the destiny of the middle classes vary from country to country. In the same sense, the formation of trusts does not at all eliminate this rivalry, as Charles Albert affirms; for, war between individuals is followed by war between trusts, representing anonymous collectivity.'

It is impossible always to know what he would have written in sequel. In any case it is certain that, while considering the Marxian compass, he must have reflected on the situation and destiny of the middle classes; and that he will still have time to reflect on them, before tumbling from the pedestal where he is perched, to fall into the ditch which he deserves.



## CHAPTER V

### USURPED FAME

#### *Mussolini During the Red Week.*

REVOLUTIONARY agitation at this period took an unexpected turn. The *leitmotif* was antimilitarism.

The name of an Anarchist soldier, Augusto Masetti, who, to protest against the Tripolitan War, and to avoid going to Africa, had shot at Colonel Stroppa in a Bologna barracks as he was about to harangue a contingent ready to leave—that name became a symbol of battle. The government did not dare to apply the extreme military code to Masetti. The war was not popular, and the masses were at a stage of development much superior to that of the period of Crispi's domination. Giolitti besides was not the man to make use of execution. He got rid of Masetti, without any trial, by having him shut up in an insane asylum, after a mental examination of which the outcome was dictated in advance.

The people demanded his liberation. They protested against his alleged insanity. He was of sane mind, they said, and his acts legitimate and heroic; Stroppa had only been severely wounded. Masetti then should be returned to his work, his family, his comrades.

They organized pro-Masetti committees throughout Italy. They published manifestos; orators from

every party multiplied their efforts. The entire year of 1913 echoed with this protest. Revolutionary forces were in full development. We have seen the charges that Mussolini made against the Tripolitan 'hirelings' and 'traitors.' Even in the Republican party, the extremist elements, like Nenni, Zuccarini, etc., prevailed, and had no respect for Giolitti's African enterprise. At this period Errico Malatesta came back to Italy (June 1913) and Mussolini saluted the disciple of Bakunin with a brilliant defence in the columns of *l'Avanti*.

Everyone felt that the smouldering fire did not lack fuel. What would come of it?

The Red Week was the epilogue.

The presence of Malatesta had contributed powerfully to the union of extremist labour forces.

At a meeting held at Ancona, April 1914, it was decided to propose to all the political labour forces of Italy a day of protest to denounce the monarchy. They chose Sunday, June 7, the national fête day for that famous statute granted by Charles-Albert of Savoy in 1848—one of the statutes that disappeared under the blows of Fascist dictatorship.

All the Revolutionary and Republican forces were agreed that if there occurred any customary acts of police repression, a general strike should be immediately proclaimed.

Mussolini busied himself inflaming public opinion in the columns of his paper.

The 7th of June all Italy flocked to meetings and demonstrations, and demanded the liberation of Massetti. Fatalities were not avoided. At Ancona, the police, blaming the rioters, killed three workmen:

two Republicans and an Anarchist. The general strike was the promised answer to this provocation. From Ancona it spread to the Marche and to Romagna; and in two days it had gained the whole of Italy. It raged, accompanied by very violent episodes, through the entire week of the 7th to the 14th.

Mussolini is said to have been the soul of the Red Week; that is a fable. He got himself much talked about at this period, not only because he was at the head of the only existing Socialist paper, but especially because many people did not expect from the paper of a parliamentary party which had been in the hands of prudent law-abiding men like Bissolati, the extremist language used by Mussolini—language which excited great enthusiasm and also violent indignation, according to the point of view.

But Mussolini was not really at the head of anything. The centre of the movement was in the Marche and Romagna. It began at Ancona and spread to Ravenna and Forlì at once, where it took on such proportions that for several days people thought it might end in the creation of a republic of these provinces, occupying in Italy a position analagous to Catalonia in Spain.

At Ravenna General Aliardi was arrested and dismissed for having been unwilling to provoke a massacre of the workmen, who had sequestered him in Savio (province of Ravenna). He never succeeded in getting reinstated on the army staff, even during the Great War. He died in the spring of 1931, and the Fascist press devoted several lines to him, speaking only of the disappearance of a Colonial general. Only the oldest among us, and . . . Mussolini,

remembered that he was the general who had not been decorated with the order of the King, as were all the others who, when a state of siege had been decreed from Sicily to Milan, had directed, and had well directed the massacre of workers and peasants.

If the city of Milan was relatively calm during this period, the writings of Mussolini were on the contrary decidedly inflamed; we have them always with us to establish his responsibility as an agitator.

Here are some extracts concerning what happened in Milan during those days, gleaned from *l'Avanti* of June 10, 1914:

'In the Piazza del Duomo there is a great display of forces. The strikers are arriving there in small detachments. From the Via Carlo Alberto emerges a small group among which are your editor and Filippo Corridoni. A large number of plain-clothes police and carabinieri attack Mussolini, who falls. Other police throw themselves on him at the same time, while Corridoni comes up and says to him: "Let's get out of here, Mussolini, no use to stay here."'

Notice in these lines, edited *en famille*, the haste to attribute to Corridoni the initiative for flight. . . . It is well to recall that in the Radical quarters of Milan Mussolini had the reputation of a braggart and a coward.

I have heard from Angelica Balabanoff's own lips—a serious woman worthy of belief, who worked for two years with Mussolini on *l'Avanti*—that this operetta hero was subject to frequent crises of terror—crises during which he saw enemies ambushed at every

corner; and that at night he was afraid even of his own shadow. These facts have been confirmed to me by the deputy Vella and by Menotti Serrati, who also worked with him on the paper during these years. Let us add that all of them agree that our hero, attacked by syphilis, had to be accompanied when he went to the doctor for his mercurial injections.\*

But listen to our man during the meetings of the Red Week:

‘The Nationalists and the bourgeois, our enemies, want their revenge. In Rome, protected by their armed police, they have attacked the workers. Something of the kind is about to happen in Milan. Saturday there will be a meeting of the Nationalists to organize another police force, worse than the one whose savage methods are already known to us. Very well, we shall have to be prepared; we can’t permit ourselves to be surprised. In every quarter, in every district, squads of workmen must form and be always on the *qui vive*, ready to give the alarm the minute the “gilded horde” approaches. If the bourgeoisie is stupid enough to want an extra-cost civil war, they will get it.’

That ‘gilded horde’ waited six years to organize. It was Mussolini who set it up by the most ruthless means.

The protagonists of the Red Week were certainly not all of them little saints. . . . There were numerous acts of pillage. Yet one might say, or at least I think so, that the Red Week saw a display of revolutionary

\* See also the chapter of ‘Memoirs’ by Angelica Balabanoff published in *Europe*, No. 72 (translator’s note).

forces on a greater scale than those of the after-War movements—that is, in the relation of forces face to face with each other.

Here is what the ‘Moderator’ of Socialism writes while the revolt was still rumbling. The quotation is long, but we must keep our promise:

‘We understand well enough [*l’Avanti*, June 12, 1914] the consternation which seems to have taken possession of public opinion. We understand the preoccupation of the ruling classes before such an overwhelming explosion of proletarian indignation. One can explain also the hesitant, timorous, and ambiguous attitude of a certain democratic element, and the attitude of a kind of Reformism, droning, tedious and monotonous, declaiming empty formulas about the collaboration of classes; while in the soul of the proletariat combative and aggressive instincts are awakening.

‘What a sad alarum for the ruling classes of Italy! They were cradling themselves in the illusion that the African war had realized a unanimity of national sentiment, as much in relation to Italy as to the outside world. They said there is no longer class, or class struggle, nor any possible general strike; there is only one reality; the Nation. Therein classes and their antagonisms disappear, parties and their ideologies.

‘The African war was supposed also to mark the end of Italian Socialism. That, at least, is what they hoped, even if they did not openly confess it. Never was there a hope more foolish, nor a hope followed by more bitter disillusionment.

‘The general strike, which ended yesterday, has

been the most serious popular movement Italy has known since 1870. There are comparatively fewer dead than after the uprising of 1898; but the present strike surpasses in size and significance the revolts of May 1898. The proletariat still exists with us, and rises against the Nationalist fatherland. Two essential elements distinguish the last general strike from all previous strikes: extent and intensity. The strike reached the whole of Italy. The great cities and the little villages, the industrial centres and the agricultural districts where peasants and day labourers were united in the same sentiment of class defence—all categories of workmen have participated, even to those in public services.

‘The strike has been not defensive, but truly offensive. The mob which formerly did not dare to measure itself with public forces, knew this time how to resist them and fight them with amazing valour. In some places the mass of strikers assembled around those barricades which certain individuals, invoking a phrase from Engels had been in haste to relegate to the storehouse of romantic accessories belonging to 1848, thus betraying their unavowed anxiety, not to say their fear. In some places (note here again the tendency of the revolt) the munition stores were attacked, fires were lighted and not confined to the salt depots as in the preceding revolts in the South. But the most striking feature of the movement is the clamour that went up in Rome: “To the Quirinal”—a clamour followed by an attempt to reach it. All this is what cast a special light on the events.

‘There is only one dark blot on these days of fire and blood: the attitude of the General Con-

federation of Labour, decreeing suddenly and arbitrarily, unknown to the leaders of the Party, the cessation of the strike at the end of the conventional forty-eight hours.

‘We consider that such a decision was an act of treason, and we uphold that judgment. What is more, we reserve the right to return to this question. And we register these events with a little of that legitimate joy which the pyrotechnist feels in surveying his creation. If the proletariat of Italy is by way of acquiring a new psychology, if the proletariat to-day enters on the scene with a new individuality, bolder and more savage, if a movement like this has been realized with a rapidity and a harmony overwhelming public bourgeois opinion, it is owing (and it is no sin of pride to affirm it) to our journal. We understand the fears and the terrors of Reformism and of Democracy in the face of such a situation, which, moreover, can only grow worse with time. The hypocrisy of the one and the other party is pitiable to us.’

Democratic opinion fulminated against this Socialist party, which wished to be at one and the same time in Parliament and behind the barricades. *Il Secolo* of Milan was spokesman for the Democrats in the issue of June 13, where the leading editorial was devoted to a polemic against Mussolini. It says:

‘The Italian Socialist paper boasts, as a marvellous result of its educative influence, the spirit of sedition or rather of disorder demonstrated by the mass of “disorganized” strikers. It celebrates with emphatic exaggeration the mustering of strikers around the barricades, the attacks on the



arms-magazines, the fires blazing here and there, the invaded churches, and especially (make note of this) the invitation to march on the Quirinal, launched at a meeting in Rome. It promises the next time even greater marvels . . . but, to measure the size and intensity of the labour movement by these tragic acts, and to rejoice in them as a hopeful symptom for the future, is a thing difficult to understand. If the importance and efficacy of a movement depends on the number of casualties accompanying it, it would be better in grave periods to invite the proletariat to beat their heads against the wall. . . .

‘It is unfortunately becoming a chronic malady with the present leaders of the Socialist party. In applying at random the revolutionary dogma they succeed in only beating about the bush, and in justifying the lowest instincts of those in revolt.’

Mussolini replied in *l'Avanti* of June 22. He renewed his expression of extremist faith, and stirred up scandal again; but this time among his own editorial comrades, who suspected a tendency in him little in keeping with legalism or Marxian fatalism. But it was thanks to this attitude of *l'Avanti* that the administrative elections occurring that June and the following months, gave to the Socialist party undreamed of successes in the principal centres of Italy.

Here is the reply of *l'Avanti* (that is to say, of Mussolini) to *Il Secolo*:

‘Revolutionary actions are not affairs in which good accountants can easily separate the active from the passive. A popular uprising has to be considered *en bloc*. Revolutions are not made by

the polished treatise of my lord Giovanni della Casa. In every popular movement the tragic alternates with the grotesque, heroism with fear, goodness with perversity. In every popular movement there are anticipations and reactions, creation and destruction, life and death. The history of the Commune shows it. That magnificent insurrection of the people of Paris gives us every feature of revolutionary actions: that is to say, that mixture of grandeur and caricature which Villaume has evoked with so much truth in *Cahiers Rouges*. But when the Commune fell in blood under the bayonets of Thiers, one man, our master, immortal to us all, rose to defend it. He lost no time in quibbling: Karl Marx justified all the measures taken by the Commune, even those due to anonymous initiative. He justified the fires, and even the execution of hostages; he celebrated fire and blood, and after the death of the Commune he kept alive above everything the cry of "Long live the Commune!" in the face of that bourgeois Europe which, with a ferocity multiplied a hundredfold by fear, was preparing for terrific vengeance.'

Note this 'ferocity multiplied a hundredfold by fear.' Exactly the post-War bourgeois psychology. Mussolini has applied this method on a grand scale face to face with a crushed bourgeoisie, whose fears he has made every effort to increase.

He continued as follows:

'It would be all too easy to contrive a depository where one could discard the work of the rabble, keeping only the work of the proletariat. But it is absurd to make the distinction. And besides, this

word "rabble" has been abused. It is probable that the slaves who withdrew to the Aventine hill were treated as rabble, as certainly the first Christians were called rabble. In the French Revolution men and women of the 14th of July, the 5th of October, the 10th of August, and the days of September were branded as rabble, assassins, cut-throats. We reiterate quietly: Of the last general strike we accept everything, the good and the bad, the proletariat and the rabble, the justice and the lawlessness, the protest and the insurrection.'

Does it not seem to you that a man who has thought and written such apologies cannot be a 'moderator' of the Socialist party, and that 'Providence' wished to show in this way that in Its divine wisdom It did not disdain to resort to the good offices of *agents provocateurs*?

If the said Providence had made a priest of Its favourite son when he was twenty years old and a great devourer of priests and capitalists, what trouble might have been spared It subsequently, in making him over into a pilot of souls to the threshold of order and of the church!!!

## CHAPTER VI

### WAR ON WAR

*Rabagas Thunders against War—Against All Interventions—  
Rabagas Turns About.*

THE echoes of the Red Week were still resounding when the shots were fired at Sarajevo, preface to the world conflagration. But the Socialist party was at the height of its electoral victory. Thanks to its support the Red Week had become an asset to the party. Mussolini was elected to the City Council of Milan, together with Turati and other comrades of the Socialist order. Important municipalities like Bologna fell into the hands of the Socialists. The partisans of non-compromise gained by this. The Reformists passed more and more to the second rank of the party.

And now we have the Great War, monstrous, infamous, and without pity, seeking to unite all countries in its embrace of fire and blood. Italy, we know, did not join the dance at the start. I have already written several times that it would have been better for Italy to fall at once over the precipice, like all the other countries (except for America and Roumania). That would have spared us ten months of civil war, which served to forge an allegiance to militarism—months which were certainly not the most tragic, but really the most diabolical of that dismal bellicose period.

In the other countries, precipitated into the War overnight, as it were, we found ourselves faced with an attitude which we do not wish to examine or discuss here, but which was a collective attitude, a mass attitude. This attitude might be considered for the Socialist party one of desertion, or weakness, or even new life, according to the point of view directing the different judgments. But it was always a question of definitely collective attitudes, faced with the accomplished fact of the War. In Italy, only the Republican party took a clear position in favour of intervention against the Triple Alliance. In the other Radical parties there were only individual desertions, occasioning as many personal 'cases.' The most sensational of these was in its time the case of Mussolini.

At the start the atmosphere was so poisoned with lies, and became so opaque and morbid, that Mussolini seemed like a champion of morality through the persistence of his anti-war attitude. He contributed largely to a state of mind hostile to war, which has not prevented him from becoming the . . . Napoleon of yesterday's war and also that of to-morrow's.

I could believe I was dreaming, when I think of it, and should be tempted to doubt my memory—I who nevertheless lived in the thick of that period, and who know that what I advance is true—if I had not under my eyes these copies of *l'Avanti*, from which to extract the series of quotations that will presently astonish you.

I give below in chronological order, and always from *l'Avanti* (directed at that time by the present operetta emperor), extracts from his articles, which (what is more) are almost always signed.

Article of July 26, entitled 'Down with War,' which ends like this:

'Even in case of a European conflagration Italy can adopt only one attitude, if she wishes not to be dragged into the final ruin: "absolute neutrality."'

Article of July 27 ending as follows:

'The proletariat must not hesitate to proclaim their desire for peace at once. If the government, disdaining the unanimous wish of public opinion, is hurled into this new adventure, the truce of arms which we declared after the last strike will be denounced. . . .'

July 29, 1914, the Socialist party launched a manifesto which says among other things:

'It is to the interest of the proletariat of all nations to circumvent and to limit to the utmost the armed conflict, useful only to the triumph of militarism and of the parasitic enterprises of the bourgeoisie. You, proletarians of Italy, who even in the midst of a period of crisis and unemployment, ever since the recent general strike, have known how to give proof of class consciousness and of a spirit of sacrifice, you must now get ready to resist Italy's being dragged into the whirlpool of this frightful adventure.'

This document carries the signature, among others, of Mussolini.

We know the miserable explanations which his present partisans offer on this subject. To paraphrase:

'He had this attitude only as long as the War was not a menacing reality to the world . . . to French democracy . . . as long as one could hope that the Socialist International would be a force capable of barring the way. . . . But afterwards . . . when the War was an accomplished fact, and when, with the International dislocated, the German Socialists had fallen into step with the troops of the Kaiser, who were invading Belgium and France (the France of '89), endangering immortal principles, then the miracle was accomplished, and Mussolini touched by grace found his road to Damascus just like St. Paul.'

Generous Providence was at length sending a saviour to Republican France. This saviour was neither Joffre nor Gallieni; his name was 'Mussolini.' *There* is a lucky coincidence for you! Happily these events have not yet joined the domain of legend, and we do not have to go very far to see if Plutarch lied.

Doubt is impossible.

No, Mussolini did not undergo the conversion they attribute to him with such complaisance. His Socialist faith, admitting that he had it, did not evaporate by contact with the War and its train of disaster; it did not vacillate before visions of terror—the troops of the Kaiser marching on France through Belgium. On the contrary, each morning he took up the cry, which he repeated combatively in public meetings: 'Down with War!' It was always a vehement protest against the possibility of Italy's intervention in this war which already embraced half of Europe.

On August 12, 1914, he wrote this letter to the lawyer Marvasi of Naples, which I take from Valera's book:

' . . . I am happy, very happy, to read in *Scintilla* your courageous and moving defence of Socialism and of Socialist Internationalism, which if one believed some impoverished minds, should have failed. Nothing is stupider or more false. They pretend, and seem to believe, that Socialism should have realized in scarcely fifty years that fraternity of peoples which Christianity has not succeeded in making tangible in the twenty centuries since the day when the vagabond of Nazareth threw in men's faces his immortal challenge. It is grotesque.

'The Socialist International has never been engaged in "preventing" war, but has been content to declare that it would fight war. And this opposition, formidable nevertheless, has occurred in all nations. I call your attention, on the third page of yesterday's *l'Avanti*, to the list of meetings organized all over Germany by the Socialist party. . . .

'This war is leading us straight to barbarism, and will bring us back to the age of clans and tribes.

'The International is the inevitable outcome of the events of the Future.'

And on August 13, at the moment of the great German offensive, he published one of his most virulent articles:

'The war between nations is the most sanguinary form of class collaboration. The bourgeoisie is happy, one can prove it by their press, whenever they can crush the proletariat and their class



autonomy on the altar of the Fatherland. The dominating cry of these days; "there are no more parties"—there is the proof of our thesis. In time of war the bourgeoisie confronts the proletariat with this tragic dilemma; either insurrection, easily drowned in blood, or participation in a joint butchery with them. Naturally! This second alternative of the dilemma hides behind words such as fatherland, duty, territorial integrity, etc. . . . But the base of the question does not change for all that. That is the profound reason that makes us hate war.'

And on August 16 this conclusion:

'We mean to remain faithful to our Socialist and International ideas to their very foundation. The storm may attack us but shall not attack our faith.'

Faithful to the foundations?

Or faithful to the Funds?\*

\*

Towards September 1914 it seemed to certain people that the immovable man was beginning to slip. He protested, however, and declared that he was always as firm as a rock.

'In September [wrote Libero Tancredi] he announced a public referendum for all sections of the party, enjoining them to send him a vote in favour of absolute neutrality, and asking them to sanction his personal attitude. And, when his friends did not fail to call his attention, in private, or in writing or at public meetings, to the

\* Translator's note: A play on the French words, *fond* and *fonds*.

duplicity of his attitude, he attacked them all as traitors (in *l'Avanti*), while in his talks with them, he revealed himself an Interventionist.

'It was then that I addressed an open letter to Mussolini, published in *Il Resto del Carlino* of Bologna, denouncing his double-faced game and calling him "a man of straw." Mussolini denied this. . . . I wrote again in the same paper confirming my accusation. (September 8, 1914.)\*'

I myself remember in fact that events took approximately that course—it made, moreover, a widely notorious affair.

Tancredi naturally does not quote Mussolini's reply, which appeared in the same Bologna paper, *Il Resto del Carlino*. It is for us to fill in the gap, for we think that both adversaries were equally right.

Mussolini wrote:

'Tancredi is an Anarchist phenomenon: an Anarchist who exalts war and would like to push Italy into the war. If there is one thing which is beginning to become really repugnant, it is precisely this Anarchism which seeks to justify its intellectual and political inversions under the too easy pretext—and the too symptomatic—of heresy. If there is anything "incorrect," it is precisely this fashion of using one's "anarchic" connections, in order to place, no matter where, one's intellectual merchandise and render service to the bourgeoisie.

'If there is any one who ought to disappear it is Libero Tancredi or . . . Massima Rocca,† take your choice. Which one of the two is the "man

\* From the files of the *Nuovo Paese*, 29 rue Godot de Mauroy, Paris, June, 1926.

† Libero Tancredi was Massima Rocca's pseudonym.

of straw"—I reserve that question to present to you to-morrow? *Massima Rocca* or *Libero Tancredi*?

'The case is really distressing! Here is a man who, seeing the grotesqueness and immorality of his own political and intellectual position augment each day, clings to every side in the hope of dragging his comrades and accomplices down with him in his ruin. He has fallen so low that he does not even notice any more that he is lying when he tells stories of his own invention, like the one about Professor Pirro. Nor does he notice that he has not even got the elementary decency to specify that I have never accepted his point of view. I cannot tolerate, and that goes without saying, that such a champion should solve the affairs of my conscience. That counsel should come from another mouth, and, in what concerns the present, I shall choose it myself.'

The polemic becomes more and more vindictive. They try to influence Mussolini, who is a 'value' to be reckoned with, toward open intervention: since he controls the daily of the Socialist party, a powerful organ read by the majority of the workers. They encourage the intercession of men like *Cesare Battisti*, and Professor *Lombardo-Radice*, all of whom had known Mussolini for years, and understood how weak and impressionable he is, and above all, how preoccupied with his popularity and prestige in the party.

As a matter of fact, Mussolini is shaken. He is no longer sure of himself. In the party everyone suspects him, and henceforth he suspects everyone. He is caught in a vicious circle.

Here again is what Tancredi writes in the periodical already quoted:

'... It was then that Mussolini negotiated with the editor of a Bologna paper, Fillipo Naldi, to whom he promised to change sides, if he would procure him another paper. Having obtained that assurance he wrote in *l'Avanti* an article preaching relative neutrality while waiting for intervention—an article which naturally made his collaborators disown him. Nevertheless he remained director of *l'Avanti* for two more weeks. He profited by this delay to prepare with Naldi, by means of a first subsidy of French origin, the organization of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, specifying that he, Mussolini, should be editor-in-chief and owner. Having attained his end, he handed in his resignation as director of *l'Avanti*; he promised publicly never to attack the Socialist party, in the bosom of which he was remaining, nor its paper. Then he went to Geneva to collect the first funds destined for *Il Popolo d'Italia*.'

This paper, in fact, appeared fifteen days later, with its editorial board scarcely completed, and proclaimed a clear Interventionist programme—that is, entrance into the War at all costs on the side of France. It was in that spirit that Mussolini launched immediately into a criticism of the Socialist party and *l'Avanti*.

The rupture between him and the party was effected in October, after a meeting which took place in Bologna. Mussolini had pleaded the cause of a relative neutrality. He was progressing visibly toward Interventionism. He was completely alienated.

Valera writes (book cited previously):

'Mussolini took the train. Arriving at San Damiano (office of *l'Avanti*) he rushed to his desk, and gathering up all the documents he had assembled during his editorship, he loaded them into a carriage and took them to his private residence.'

The following month his own paper came out, *Il Popolo d'Italia*. It carried as a sub-title *A Socialist Daily*, and on the margin were two maxims: 'He who has steel has bread' (Blanqui); 'The revolution is an idea which has found bayonets' (Napoleon).

He had to throw down his mask adroitly. Having abandoned *l'Avanti* he remained nevertheless in the Socialist party.

But the day of judgment arrived all the same: his case reappeared before the Milan section. Again we leave the report to Valera, an eye-witness:

'It was a tumultuous meeting, which amid loud vociferations demanded the head of Benito Mussolini. . . . They had great difficulty in finding a president. They tried to calm the meeting in order to permit the accused to defend himself, to explain his attitude . . . but it was not possible. Serrati took the platform to ask them to let Mussolini speak in reverent silence. A wasted effort. Scarcely had Mussolini opened his mouth then everyone shouted "louder! louder" The speaker's voice was lost in the uproar: "You are more implacable than the bourgeoisie's judges. . . . If you proclaim that I am unworthy——" A thundering "yes!" rolled across the hall.

'Mussolini left the meeting, very pale and trembling with rage, his finger to his mouth; he seemed to say: we shall meet again.'

Valera wrote these words in a transport of admiration for Mussolini, and certainly with apologetic purpose. But these words show above all the considerable confusion caused in the minds of numerous Socialist workers, through the venality of men who for years had paraded anti-militarist and revolutionary sentiment, and who especially had lain in wait for the weaknesses and doctrinal heresies of their comrades, in order to proceed to their execution—even to clamouring for the heads of those who went over to the enemy. We need only recall Mussolini's campaigns against Orano, Podreca, Monticelli, Bonomi, Bissolati, and others who were professed followers of Marx, Engels and Bernstein:

‘The banks of the Rubicon swarm with men who want to be bought; so make your offers to the buyers in the market of consciences; there are some of all kinds, all ages, all origins.’

He could not have described himself better in a few lines.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW HE WAS BOUGHT

EVERYONE saw from the beginning the goal Mussolini was attempting to reach through his elaborate equivocations. But a good many kept still, preferring under suspicion of heresy to eat from the table of the marionette who henceforth was to be the unsurpassed champion of Boche-killers. Moreover, a good part of the bourgeoisie had joined the Interventionists. This was true even of the monarchy, of the King, who by virtue of the powers conferred on him by Article V of the Constitution, was stronger than all the Parliamentary majorities. In fact, the proof of it is that the famous Pact of London (signed one month before Italy's entrance into the War) was the work of Salandra, then president of the Council, and of Sonnino, Minister of Foreign Affairs, acting not only without the knowledge of Parliament, but also without that of the other ministers: in other words the work of the King.

Here again Mussolini played the role of the fly on the coach-wheel, and carried off all the laurels. The War? But it was Mussolini who wanted it and provoked it. Without him (and many imbeciles believed it) Italy would have mouldered in neutrality: worse, she might have marched with Austria. Without him, we would have seen the Austrians in Rome. . . .

That Mussolini had been bought no one doubted; but how to prove it?

His accomplices had no interest in exposing themselves by unmasking him.

Certain of them, however, did talk, but not till later on when our hero, true to himself and strong through his martial activity, wished to receive the first fruits of empire, or at least of imperialism. Alceste de Ambris, Tancredi and Maria Rygier told subsequently some very interesting things concerning the bargains concluded at this time. They were the principal intermediaries in this affair, and the ones who made the round trips between Paris, Milan and Rome. They must know more than they tell, for that matter. For example, de Ambris, in his brochure on Mussolini admits that Interventionist propaganda in favour of France was liberally cultivated in 1914. For his own defence he makes a distinction between those who, convinced from the first of the necessity of intervention, finally accepted funds to bring about the said intervention; and those who pronounced in favour of the Entente only after having been recompensed. De Ambris naturally places himself among the first, and among the second he ranks Mussolini, to whom assuredly he does no injustice.

As for us, we are persuaded that all those who had the decency never to pocket a cent for their aid in this vast political enterprise—enterprise which would necessarily disorganize the proletariat, and at the same time impose on them their heavy tribute of blood and misery and their share of the responsibility—all those, I contend (and there were many of them),\*

\* Kropotkin, for example, who was for the Entente, never knew whether the others had been paid, never having been paid himself.



will never be able to give us information as to the price paid for Mussolini.

We can believe the men who at a given moment signed up at the cashier's windows of various governments to lead new recruits to the cause of intervention and to war preparations, when they tell us that such and such a man was corrupted and bought. But there is nothing to prove that they are not hiding that precise portion of the truth which would reveal their complicity in the corruption of the others.

Marcel Cachin, for instance, who spoke in Milan at a great Interventionist mass-meeting with Mussolini, must know something. But could we quite simply put faith in what he would say? Would he not be afraid that someone else might reveal his record?

The War over, there arose several discordant voices in the camp of our Italian Rocambole. The Interventionists quarrelled among themselves; certain of them were for Wilson, others for d'Annunzio.

Mussolini (after some hesitations which gave him time to name his price, and which were resolved through his habitual methods of extortion) having lavished a certain applause on Wilson, turned resolutely toward d'Annunzio—that is, against those who renounced the creation of the greatest possible Italy.

It was then that Mussolini organized a demonstration against Bissolati and had him hissed by his crew at the Scala Theatre in Milan. But it was also at this time that a paper appeared in Rome called *l'Italia del Popolo*, a title proposing an adverse policy to that of Mussolini's. The new paper, clearly inspired by Bissolati, opened a running fire against Mussolini, and almost reduced him to silence.

In the issue of Bissolati's paper for March 20, 1919, we read the following lines:

'The low and idiotic adventurer who systematically covers with mud the most honest men in the country, may persist in his vile and cowardly insinuations but he will not succeed in deceiving any Italian who respects himself and respects his country. We take it upon ourselves to unmask this creature who knows precisely how to spit bile and perpetrate evil. We shall show, documents in hand, by what funds the "Journal of the Producer"\* is nourished and kept alive, and what degree of disinterestedness marks the demagogic campaigns it conducts. The public can point a finger at this last incarnation of Cagliostro, whom one finds successively as the anarchist of the Red Week, as the inventor of absolute neutrality, as the juggler of democratic war and Imperialist peace, and as the very humble servant of the Italian steel industry.'

There was no way to speak more clearly. The bandit knew the name and address of the man who was spitting in his face so openly, but he preferred to feign deafness. Later, May 3, the same paper repeats the accusation:

'We have accused Cagliostro of having very patriotically cashed cheques from the French Government. Cagliostro wishes to bring an action, and that is his duty. We shall do ours by nailing to the pillory this vulgar adventurer, at the cross-road of his folly and his crimes.'

\* After the War the sub-title of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which was 'Socialist Daily' was changed to 'The Producers' Daily.'

Bring an action! Idle words.

If these words had been ours I could understand. But this accuser was formerly one of the staff of the *Popolo d'Italia*.

The threat of bringing an action remained a threat, and afterwards evaporated for all time.

Mussolini is now in power. He is the all-powerful, the unique, the irresistible ruler. He is the grand star of the Italian firmament and of Fascist gangdom.

In the courts of assizes in the department of the Seine, a lawyer armed only with his great talent, and a fine eloquence coupled with a probity above suspicion—Maitre Henri Torrès—defends a young man, Ernest Bonomini, who killed a Fascist emissary in Paris, a certain Bonservizi. It was a political trial, like all those taking place subsequently up to the trial of De Rosa at Brussels; but it was certainly the most interesting of them, in spite of the mediocrity of the victim, because it involved one of the first events of the kind where Fascism and anti-Fascism faced each other before the public. The civil party was represented by the lawyer Gautrat of the Paris bar. He was the confidential man of the Italian embassy. The Attorney-General for the Republic, code in hand, made his claim with a sly and measured eloquence. He demanded the implacable hand of the law against the young homicide who, miraculously having escaped from the Fascist hell, under great disfavour, was probably tired of the poor existence left him to lead. The accused invoked no extenuating circumstance, and took refuge behind no lies. One of the arguments of the Attorney-General seems to have been pre-

meditated with the intention of provoking a blush from Torrès and of embarrassing Gautrat:

‘Mussolini, (said the Attorney-General) don’t forget it, French jurors—is the man who felt the deepest emotion in the face of France’s tragedy of 1914; it is thanks to his disinterested efforts that Italy finally entered the War beside our glorious flags.’

Loud music, please!

But Maître Torrès’ answer, perhaps desired, came back, flashing and decisive.

It was the most poignant moment of his defence. Everyone was waiting for the oratorical power of this great lawyer. There were reporters from every country of the globe. There were illustrious witnesses and many others more humble like the author of these lines. I remember having seen Séverine, Miguel de Unamuno, Léon Blum, etc. Torrès declared that he could solemnly deny the arguments of the Attorney-General. Mussolini had been moved by the danger of France at the precise moment when he had pocketed the sums which had been reserved for his purchase.

That was the stunning blow!

The fist shaken at the distinguished prosecutor seemed singularly to reinforce and enlarge the defence launched by this powerful voice. It reached to the poor Maître Gautrat, who talked and argued at length, developing his theme with elegance and gusto. He spoke not only as a good Frenchman and a good patriot but also as an admirer of Fascism and of Mussolini. There was always one point which he did not dare to approach—that which the Attorney-

General had emphasized and which Torrès had violently combated.

Who had ordered Maître Gautrat to keep silent? Although Alphonso XIII had believed he could defend himself against the attacks in Blasco Ibanez' book, *Alphonso XIII Unmasked*, in this case no one dared to contradict the assertions of Torrès.

I wanted to question Torrès myself. I obtained a statement from him, which I published in several papers, as follows:

'There was a moment quite at the start when the Italian Socialist party was unanimous against the armed intervention of Italy. The French Government was concerned, and considered the matter in a Cabinet meeting. They examined the question to see if there were not some means of converting some of the Socialists to the cause of war—a financial means. The name of Mussolini was mentioned. The first payment was 15,000 francs, and after that they allowed him 10,000 francs monthly. It was Guesde's secretary, Dumas, who brought him the money. It was then that *Il Popolo d'Italia* was born, immediately Interventionist. That is the exact story, which no one will dare to deny, for fear of more crushing documentary evidence.'

But is any other documentary evidence really necessary?

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE 'HOLY MAN' AT HOME

*Madame Rachel Abandoned—A Woman Seduced  
Imprisoned, and then Confined in an Insane Asylum  
by Fascist Doctors.*

LET us listen now to a woman's testimony. I anticipate the objection. It will be said:

'But stop *there!* You are attacking an individual's private life; you have no right to descend to such sordidness!'

Not so fast then. . . .

First of all, Mussolini and his bullies have always held that any weapon, no matter what, was good enough to use on their adversaries. And further, if it were possible to accuse men who are enemies of Fascism of deeds like those we are going to relate, how many of those admirers of fascism who will not allow that one may sink so low as to probe into people's private lives, would be shocked to the point of admitting that a cause is condemned by the mere fact of its being defended by men whose own lives are so devoid of a sense of morality? In any event, these facts are true, and so we believe it is our duty to relate them. It is a question of a poor defenceless victim against whom the means of vengeance which I shall disclose later could not have been employed unless the Roman tyrant had by this time acquired extrava-

gant powers. Finally, is it not useful to see in what hands Divine Providence has placed Its confidence?

Why, in brief, should we have to omit testimony against a political personage, coming from a woman who lived with Mussolini several years; even though the reasons impelling her to testify had no connection with public life?

Allow us then to let Madame Irene Desler speak, a native of Trent, the daughter of Albino Desler. This is not a matter of gossip but of a document registered with a notary, Camillo Tappati of Turin, under the number 51,413. Here is the text:

‘I declare that I lived for about two years in marital relations with a certain Benito Mussolini, to whom I bore a son, legally recognized by his father, and inscribed at the office of the Civil Department of Milan, where I registered him. I attest that at the time when Mussolini resigned from *l'Avanti* we found ourselves in such poverty that we made our plans to go to America—a project which we abandoned soon after. At this period I spent the little bit of money which I personally possessed in order to meet our needs. After the founding of *Il Popolo d'Italia* our circumstances were not appreciably improved, and we continued to live in embarrassment; but suddenly after Mussolini's return from a trip to Geneva in January 1914 or 1915 (I cannot say exactly) they were completely changed. Mussolini told me he had a lot of money, and I remember having seen him handle important amounts.\*

‘Before his trip Mussolini had talked to me of

\* This could only have been 1915, as in January 1914 the War had not started.

a French personage whom he named, but whose name I have forgotten, and who had offered him a million on condition that his journal would launch a vigorous campaign for Italian intervention in the War, and against the enemies of such intervention. I asked him on his return if the money he showed me came from the source of which he had spoken. He answered that it came from France. He offered me a brilliant which I refused.

'I remember that Mussolini was much pre-occupied with the fact that his trip to Geneva had been severely criticized in Socialist circles of Milan. He said to me: "I am lost; they must have noticed something." Mussolini decided not to go outside the country any more himself; his journeys were too conspicuous.

'For that reason he took as intermediaries Clerici and Morgagni, Clerici for foreign trips, and Morgagni to change the money and effect all other operations. I remember that Clerici and Morgagni, who had lived very modestly before knowing Mussolini upon his return from Geneva, afterwards lived opulently—so much so that Clerici, according to Mussolini, bought himself a villa at Varese.

'I insist on the fact that Mussolini talked to me several times about the French origin of the money he received.

'I am ready to repeat these declarations in no matter what circumstances, and before no matter whom, even on sacred oath.'

Let us now look a little more closely at this affair which gives us so much interesting information.



We have seen that the facts involved in this document run approximately from 1912 to 1915. In 1912 Mussolini was already the father of a daughter (named Edda, who is now more than 20 years old), whose mother is none other than the present Rachel, a woman of the people who has followed the Duce as best she can in his successive metamorphoses, and with whom he had only a civil marriage. What was Providence thinking of then?

Madame Rachel who was at that time only a poor woman, had then been abandoned by her legitimate husband who preferred to cohabit with this Irene Desler mentioned above. It is not certain that he confessed to the latter at this moment his position of married man and father of a family.

Irene Desler, who came of a good family, had a small reserve of money, and Mussolini lived with her until the end of 1914. No more money, no more love? Mussolini was capable of much worse than that.

He must have had personal reasons for separating from Madame Desler. Afterwards political reasons developed for getting her out of the way. As we have seen by her own declaration, Madame Desler, while living with the superman, had had occasion to know too closely the compromising circumstances of his . . . conversion, and of his change of fortune. It is equally possible that this lady had threatened him with exposure and even blackmail for the position in which he had placed her by making her a mother and leaving her with her son without means of support. It was human.

What then did Mussolini do?

This lady (we have seen) was a native of the town

of Trent, at this period under Austrian domination. Hence she came from a country at war with Italy.

She was therefore suspect. And one fine night her home was invaded by the police. She was arrested without any charge brought against her, sent to prison with her son, then about three years old (it is 1917), and from there to a concentration camp, where she stayed until the end of the War. I can bear personal witness to all of this, for I saw this lady with her little boy, Mussolini's son, legally recognized by him, and his own portrait in miniature. I saw her in Florence in 1917 as she was being conducted under police escort to the concentration camp.

All this information she communicated directly to me. Others, too, were present, and were witnesses like me: the deputy Mario Trozzi of Rome, a lawyer; the journalist Mario Aspettati of Florence; and the deputy Gino Baldesi, also of Florence. They contributed with others and myself to the aid and comfort of the poor victim. One of those who was with us has gone to-day, but his death was violent, and because of that I want to offer him here the homage of a poignant affection. I want to speak of Giuseppe Di Vagno, a young lawyer thirty years of age, beautiful, strong and good, assassinated at Mola di Bari in August 1921 by a band of about thirty masked Fascists who are now the principal representatives of the new regime at Bari.

I must add that the poor Irene Desler gave all of us the impression of a fine woman, well brought up, serious, madly in love with 'her little Mussolini,' and ravaged by her fate, but always with an entirely discreet and dignified bearing. I saw her again in

December 1919 in the Socialist hall of Milan: it was a brief interview. An enormous crowd was waiting for us for a mass meeting, and I had scarcely time to salute her and to embrace the little boy, whom she took with her everywhere like a Madonna of the Sorrows.

In the Italian edition of this book, I ended this chapter with the question: 'Whatever became of this poor woman and her child?'

Even if since that time there has been news of Madame Desler, one cannot say as much of her son, who would be a young man now about seventeen years old.

We can infer by deduction the fate of the mother from reading a pamphlet recently published in French by Maria Rygier.\* This ex-ally of Mussolini, fallen into disfavour, recounts her vicissitudes since the day when she dared to dispute the Fascist policy. She tells how Mussolini wanted to get rid of her without recourse to the noisy publicity of a trial, by having her shut up in an insane asylum. Arrested, Madame Rygier was subjected to the medical examination of eminent specialists from the Polyclinic at Rome. But they had to release her because of the opposition of Professor Mingazzini, who refused to be an accomplice in a purely political operation.

But Madame Rygier adds (and this interests us particularly) that another woman had been sacrificed by Mussolini through the same method. It concerned

\* *Mussolini, Informer of the French Police, or, the Hidden Reasons for his 'Conversion.'* Brussels, 1928.

a woman of German nationality (a native of Austria), who had been the mistress of Mussolini during the War. This unfortunate, after having succeeded in escaping a first attempt at imprisonment to which the Roman doctors would not lend themselves, ended by being confined in an insane asylum, thanks to certain accommodations which Mussolini found among doctors of the adjacent provinces.

It is only too evident that this woman, separated from her son, it is not known by what means, is none other than Irene Desler, former mistress of Mussolini, and mother of a son of whom he is the father.

Is it really despicable to expose facts like these about this man's intimate life?

I even go further and believe that there ought to be created in every country, where human conscience can still discuss problems of justice and of solidarity, a league of women and mothers, whose definite aim would be to bring down a universal malediction on the head of the Duce Barabas, who has wantonly drenched Italy in blood.

We know then what has become of the mother, but who will ever tell us what has become of the son?

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GENERALISSIMO UNDER FIRE

#### *The Decorations—The Victorious Party.*

ON May 24, 1915, Italy finally entered the War. Who remembers it to-day? Who remembers the genesis of events?

Very soon Victor-Emmanuel III himself will be persuaded that it was Mussolini who declared war, who directed it, who stopped the German advance at Caporetto, and who even created the Alps.

The War was with us: the King, who had wanted it and who had so cleverly juggled Giolitti's manœuvres, could now pretend merely to have submitted to it. That is why the legend was allowed to pass of a war imposed by the man in the street, under menace of revolution. There had to be an excuse found in case events turned out badly: one could never take too many precautions.

But if the question is examined objectively, even admitting that it was the Fascists who imposed the War, one is obliged to state that they were entirely outside of the direction of the country's affairs at this period. It is true that Giolitti had to retire, but the reins of State remained in the hands of the old bourgeois party, which according to Fascism is in complete disintegration to-day. If then Fascism is the party of war and of victory, it can only be a question in that

event of a future war. But anyway let us see how Fascism participated in the last victory.

For again our hero has nothing in common with a Plutarch hero. I am referring to facts happening only yesterday and having nothing to do with greater facts. What are the degrees of military service of 'General Mussolini'?

To begin with, Mussolini ignored the voluntary recruitment of the Garibaldian legion, created before the armed intervention of Italy, to give military aid to France. Then after the Italian intervention he was satisfied to respond to the call of his class (1883). One had to be technically disqualified to be exempt from that. How could anyone under such circumstances form a victory party, unless that party had for its aim the undue appropriation of victory towards imperialist ends? Our cinema hero was only six months at the front, interrupted by innumerable leaves, over nearly four years of war, and this on his own testimony.\* He participated in no active engagements. The rest of the time that he spent in training was made so easy for him that he could co-operate almost continually with his paper.

He was wounded, not in battle, but by accident during bomb-throwing practice at Bettica. This episode is so little Napoleonic that our Cagliostro has preferred not to emphasize it in his *War Journal*—a journal which is nothing more than a long apology for himself. There is the banal accident which won him a self-interested glory among his own kind—the old revolutionaries, who, having escaped the draft with 'myopia' or with 'hernia,' felt the need of sprinkling

\* *My War Journal*, French translation, Paris, 1932.

themselves with the blood of their section-leader, in order to disguise the mockery of their own position.

I am satisfied to quote only one document. I shall not bother about the decorations which these gangsters distributed mutually after the march on Rome.

The Italian army (like all armies) possessed an infinite number of decorations to reward services and heroisms of war. All right, I am giving below a facsimile of the document bestowing a reward on our Generalissimo. Examine this document attentively: there is no allusion to any armed action. It is a reward given wholesale to a mass of corporals and sergeants who were able to show a clean 'crime-sheet.' Look for a single word relating to Mussolini's wounds, and you will understand the insignificance of the whole matter.

Here is a reproduction of the famous document which Mussolini attempts to conceal as much as possible for the same reason that I wish to expose it.

*Translation.*

Royal Italian Army, 2nd Regiment of Bersaglieri,  
Headquarters.

The sergeant

Mussolini, Benito, son of the deceased Alessandro, of said regiment, regimental No. 12467, is authorized to wear the distinctive insignia instituted by the royal decree of May 1916, No. 641.

On applying for the circular 17,257 of the military record of the current year, I authorize the sergeant Mussolini to add to his ribbon two little silver stars with five points, 5 millimetres in diameter.

Zone of War, 14 May, 1918.

(Signed)

Colonel Commanding the Regiment.



# Regio Esercito Italiano

1° REGGIMENTO BERGAGLIERI

COMANDO

Al Sergente

Mussolini Benito fu Alessandro

del suddetto Corpo

al 1° di marzo 1918.

è autorizzato a fregiarsi del distintivo istituito

col R. Decreto 21 maggio 1916, N. 641.  
Quattrore il Sergente Mussolini si appose ad essi  
che ne due medaglie d'argento a cinque punte del diametro  
di 5 mm a metà delle lucide N. 35 del giornale N. 1 con anelli

per la guerra, 14 Maggio 1918

IL COLONNELLO

COMANDANTE IL REGGIMENTO



G. G. G.



Behold the War Thunderer!  
Behold Joffre!  
Behold Hindenburg!  
I am wrong. Behold Napoleon!

\*

To grasp the truth about the psychology of philosophic intervention as practised by the soldier Mussolini, one must read two writers, who, not being politicians, could permit themselves a sincerity forbidden to Mussolini.

Giovanni Papini, erstwhile atheist converted to Christianity, wrote at this time:

‘We had to have a hot bath of black blood, after so many other tepid baths of maternal milk softened by fraternal tears. We had to have a fine flow of blood. . . . After all we are too numerous. And war takes away a quantity of men who were living because they were born. Among the thousands and thousands of carcasses interlaced in death, all alike in their shrouds, how many are there who would merit, I don’t say a tear, but a memory?’\*

Here is what Prezzolini wrote elsewhere:

‘Whoever has written and sacrificed himself, fatigued and brutalized himself, over six months, to convince the public of the necessity of war; whoever has contributed to forming public opinion, whoever has created enthusiasm, or more simply who has known how through persuasion to lead people to a passive state—that one, I say, is not compelled to any further duty.

\* Quoted from *l’Avanti*, April 6, 1916.

More than ever he is his own master and everything is permitted to him. . . . Go to war, you who wish to!"\*

The misfortune was that those who went were precisely those who did not want to go.

\* Prezzolini, *La Voce*, July 15, 1915.

## CHAPTER X

### MUSSOLINI'S BAND

#### *Victory in Question Again—Eight Demi-Gods—Shall We Stop Our Nostrils?*

THE Fascist party who by now have imposed the Black Shirt on all of Italy, comprised certain of the elements that contributed to victory in the last war (in so far as one can really talk about an Italian victory)—we mean the actual soldiers of that war. They of course belonged to all parties, even to those ante-dating Fascism; for it is impossible to conceive of an army composed only of women, invalids and buffoons like Farinacci, Michele Bianchi and their kind. There were many who, deported as deserters after years in the trenches for having felt the need of a few hours of liberty, had after all seen the war at closer range than Mussolini and his crew. When I say *his crew*, I am speaking of his first constituents, those who formed the core of Fascism. That was the group of former revolutionaries, expelled and repulsed from all parties, who made the *Fasces* (in Italian, *Fascio*, a word which had known an heroic past in Sicily in the year 1894) around the former editor of *l'Avanti*. All of them had seen the War through opera-glasses, not to say telescopes. We know them well, it will not be difficult to present them in a few lines apiece.

**Humberto Pasella.** Formerly a Hervéist Syndicalist. He was the first secretary of the *Fasci*.<sup>\*</sup> He had directed the resounding strikes of 1910-11, in the mining zone of the island of Elba (at Piombino). He was never a soldier, although young and healthy. He was afterwards caught, his hand in the purse of the Fascist funds. Mussolini preferred not to get rid of him.

But Amerigo Dumini, who had had an old quarrel with Pasella, put it up to the 'Duce' to choose between him and the secretary of the *Fasci*. It was only then that Mussolini decided to ship Pasella off (who afterwards came back on the crest of the Black Shirts), in order not to deprive himself of the far more precious services rendered by one who five years later was the assassin of Matteotti, and who, from 1919 on, was a specialist in this kind of work.

**Cesare Rossi**, who was abducted from Switzerland by Fascist hired thugs, can now meditate in Mussolini's jails on the generosity of his former divinity. In 1924 there occurred the affair of Matteotti, which ended badly. It was then that panic seized the leaders of the Fascist regime, and that the whole world looked on in amazement at the ignoble scuffle to which these illustrious scoundrels abandoned themselves, wallowing in orgies and in crime. There was a general alarm, in which those who could not crush the others were crushed themselves. That is what happened to Rossi. He experienced successively jail and exile, and then, taken by surprise, as was said above, he was condemned to thirty years of prison by the Fascist Tribunal. Rossi was one of the first to follow Musso-

<sup>\*</sup> Plural of *Fascio* (Latin, *Fasces*).

lini in Interventionism. He never abandoned him until the assassination of Matteotti. He was a former Syndicalist in the Sorel tradition. He carried on the war . . . in the Victor-Emmanuel Arcade in Milan.

*Michele Bianchi*, one of the *quadrumvirs* of the March on Rome. He also came from Syndicalism. He had always been a parasite in the labour market. His accounts were never in order. Always he had had to flee from, rather than leave, the places where he made revolutionary propaganda, because of the unruly, dissolute and dishonest life he led, and especially because of his embezzlements. He never did a day of military service.

*Libero Tancredi*, of whom Mussolini has talked to us before.\* He had already run the gamut of political debauchery and of debauchery of every kind. Calling himself an Anarchist Individualist, he had been discarded by all the Anarchists whom he had duped one after the other. He had been known in Italy, in France and in North America for his theories, which however did not always remain in the realm of theory, like those on non-morality, theft among comrades, etc. Vain, with a glib and facile culture, liking to sow discord, garrulous, bland or insolent according to the moment, incapable of balance, he will always be the ruin of anything he touches, of any cause he adopts, or of any party that adopts him.

*Edmondo Rossoni*, of whom we have already spoken.† A voluptuary, always tired, a paradoxist, a born demagogue. In 1914 at the time of the Red Week, he

\* See page 55.

† See page 35.

directed a weekly, *Il Proletario*, in New York. He wrote prose of this variety:

‘The victims of the massacres ordered in Milan in 1898 by Bava Beccaris were avenged two years later. A crowned head joined them in death (Umberto I killed by Bresci). This proves that in spite of everything history is just, and if one day the proletariat in its hatred makes Victor Emmanuel III submit to the same fate, that day we shall cry “long live the King!” but for the moment we cry: “long live the proletarian rabble which is preparing for you, all of you, gutter journalists and labour parasites, days much sadder still.”’\*

He came back to Italy at the beginning of the War in order to spread *propaganda in its favour*. He never stepped inside of a barracks unless to make ‘War-to-the-finish’ speeches to soldiers.†

*Filippini* (one of those imprisoned for the assassination of Matteotti). A lawyer, he was dropped from the Milan bar for having been a swindler. After the March on Rome, he was rehabilitated with the honours due to his rank. He likewise never took part in the War.

*Amerigo Dumini*. The celebrated executor of Mussolini’s orders against Matteotti. ‘The man who introduced himself with this announcement: ‘Dumini, ten homicides.’ He was at home in Mussolini’s house in Milan. The paper *Il Popolo* of Rome (Catholic and populist), related in the issue of June 22, 1924, the

\* *Il Proletario*, June 20, 1914, New York.

† Publisher’s note: the same Rossoni whom Mussolini has appointed Minister of Agriculture and Forage, January, 1935.

following significant event of which he was perpetrator:

‘On the second of June, 1921, the famous Dumini, coming back from Sarzana, passed by the Via Carriona at Carrara, where he came upon a young girl, who, ignorant of political affairs, wore a red carnation in her corsage; he insulted her and slapped her. Her brother Amato Lazzari, mutilated in the War, running up to see what was happening, found himself face to face with Dumini, who killed him on the spot. His mother who came to the scene terrified, was slain in turn by a revolver shot through the heart fired by this same Dumini; while the young girl owed her escape only to flight.’

There then are the human dregs which created Fascism, since they were the ones who made up Mussolini's entourage from 1919 to 1922.

What was their programme?

It reduced itself to plundering ‘those bourgeois pigs,’ as they called them among themselves. It was in brief an industry speculating in fear.

Whenever the fear motive lacked force with the great bourgeoisie they found means to intensify it. Thus one day Mussolini had a bomb carried to the Archbishop of Milan by an unknown passer-by.\*

\* Here is what was written on this subject in the files of the *Nuovo Paese*, already cited, by Messrs. Bazzi and Rossi, particularly well informed. ‘The affair of the bombs sent to the Archbishop of Milan is very simple. Mussolini himself, on leaving the office of *Il Popolo d'Italia* stopped the first citizen who seemed qualified to fulfil the desired mission. He gave him ten lire and sent him off with the address of the Archbishop, which Rossato, ignorant of it all, had written with his own hand a few

That archbishop is to-day Pope, thanks to Mussolini, in exchange for his benediction. Up to now Fascism is a closed vessel that risks no overflow.

But to return to our portraits.

*Farinacci.* We cannot pass over such a man in silence. He makes all military glories since Leonidas seem pale by comparison. As proof I need no more than his record of service published by the whole Italian press:

'The soldier Roberto Farinacci, son of Michele and of Maria Scognamilio, soldier of the first rank, class 1892, district of Cremona, already disqualified for military service and having passed a second inspection as required by the decree of August 1, 1915.

'Called to the colours November 22, 1915, he was enlisted in the 3rd Regiment of telegraph engineers, December 11, 1915. Sent to the war zone in the 3rd company, formed April 26, 1916. Corporal of this company April 30, 1916. Leaves the war zone March 29, 1917, to be detailed to the service of State railroads. He is sent at the same date on free leave, and, transferred to the district of Cremona, he is given indefinite furlough.'

As to having a safe job, no one could do better.

The last to join this noble company is *Balbo*, the assassin of the priest Minzoni at Argenta (Province of Ferrara).

This one is a former Republican. At the time of the minutes before, under Mussolini's dictation. The latter afterwards found it irresistibly comic that the unfortunate, who for ten lire had done his errand, should have had to submit to a week of prison.'



assassination of Matteotti, there were on his record some rather piquant revelations. The celebrated rascal had a bone to pick with the *Voce Repubblicana*, a Roman daily, which had made exposures concerning the complicity of Balbo in the assassination of the priest Minzoni. But he was caught in his own snare: for while he was temporarily in the position of the accused [in the action he brought against the paper], he decided to declare himself an enemy of all Fascist lawlessness. It was then that the lawyer Conti, editor of the above-mentioned sheet, exposed a letter whose authorship Balbo was obliged to admit. In this letter he advised, he even commanded, a systematic beating-up of the Socialists of Ferrara, whom the courts had for the most part acquitted of the grave charges brought against them by the Fascists.

The balloon was pricked. Balbo was made to pay the expenses of the trial and had to resign from his position as general of the National Militia. Here is the text of the document, the original of which the lawyer Conti presented to the court:

‘If they persist in remaining, you will have to give them a good thrashing, without going to extremes, but keeping it up until they decide to leave.

‘Show this part of my letter to the Prefect also, to whom you will say for me that I have sufficient proof to justify my claim in refusing to tolerate such bandits in this city or this province. The police would do well to persecute them by means of weekly arrests. And it would be a good thing for the Prefect to see that the King’s Proctor understands that we have no need of a string of

trials, in order to proceed ultimately to beatings in the grand style.'

And here are the final conditions of the contract by which Italo Balbo agreed to go over from the Republican party to Fascism. They were published by the *Voce Repubblicana* in the issue of November 29, 1924, as communicated by the ex-editor of the Ferrara Fascist weekly, *Il Balilla*,—a certain Guido Torti, a deserter to the ranks of disillusionment.

'His Excellency the Generalissimo Italo Balbo, passed from Republican circles over to the Ferrara Fascists in 1921—a period when Fascism already possessed fifty-four powerful nuclei scattered through the province, where they reigned henceforth almost without opposition. And the transfer of the future generalissimo from the Republican camp to the Monarchist camp was negotiated and concluded with three persons still living and of sound mind (the deputy Barbato Gattelli, the lieutenant Olao Gaggioli and the writer of these lines) who can testify that it was under the following conditions:

1. A monthly payment of 1,500 liras.
2. Immediate nomination to the position of secretary.
3. Guarantee of employment in a bank at the end of the Fascist campaign.

'Balbo\* only consented to handing in his resignation from the Republican party if these three points were guaranteed to him: but not before.'

\* Publisher's note: According to the press, appointed by Mussolini Governor of Lybia and Air Marshal, January 1934. He is also a member of the Fascist Grand Council.

Fortune brushed with its wings the defeated Radicals at the time of the Matteotti affair. But they were too attached to legal methods to know how to profit by it.

There was only a brief hour when we could enjoy the performance, obscene though it was. Here is what I wrote about it at the time:

‘Where to find the novelist, the poet or the painter who will give us the picture of this fantastic orgy, in which the heroes to whom eternal Rome seemed to have confided for ever the command of Italy and perhaps of the world, were wallowing in the mud of a modern Suburra, in an infernal saraband whose dissolution led them to their own ruin.’

## CHAPTER XI

### AFTER THE WAR

*The Flow and Ebb of Fascism—The Shadow of Zarathustra—  
The State Machine to Pulverize Men—In What Way was  
The Prison Anticipated where Mussolini is Executioner?*

WE have seen that every element, no matter what its origin, served to contribute to the formation of the famous *Fasci*. Under such conditions how could Fascism hope to have a programme? A programme supposes a basis, an ideology, which can be beautiful or ugly, orientated to the Right or to the Left, but which has a certain homogeneousness, a certain harmony. These are things that cannot be improvised, especially with disparate elements like those that gravitated around the *Popolo d'Italia*. Ideas, principles and programmes are evolved only little by little, in a slow gestation through the course of events. They may become corrupted after a while, but to take shape, to succeed in possessing the force that permits them to live, they must have crept a long time in the shadow, passing successively by the stages of heresy, conspiracy and martyrdom.

It is in this wise that an ideology may generate forces, and that these forces are chosen, little by little in the silence, in the darkness of tyranny, in the fervour of a passion for justice sufficient to breathe

life into them. But a programme never takes shape in a crematory furnace.

With Mussolini what dominated was *hatred*. But this hatred had nothing in common with the sublime hatred of the rebel against the tyrant, of the just against authority; with the hatred which is really the revolt of down-trodden love; the generous hatred that inspires the poet and exalts the martyrs; the hatred of Brutus for Cæsar, of Bruno for Popery, of Mazzini for tyrants. These are not the sentiments that inspired the grand vizier of the Black Shirts. His hatred is self-sustaining, it is the thirst for vengeance, which has for cause not an inflicted injustice but the discovery by others of his own infamies: that is what he cannot forgive. He could not admit that his change of front was paid for with the same kind of rewards he had accused the Tripolitan Socialists of taking. They, however, had been less repugnant, less calculating, more sincere.

Paul Valera has told us with what rage Mussolini, leaving the meeting which had just expelled him from the Socialist party, shouted these words: 'You will pay for this!' It is only in that sense that he showed spirit afterwards. Up to 1920 his hatred grew in direct ratio to his lack of success, against which he struggled in vain by taking various attitudes, one more extravagant than the other—gestures inspired by the necessities of the moment, and by the fear of disappearing from the public scene. But once he had seized power, his hatred was aggravated again by the uncertainty of the future, by the impossibility he had found of giving himself a programme, and by the perpetual anxiety caused by his conviction that he was

a despised leader, as much by those who served him as by those he had betrayed.

Up to 1920 each one of his phrases allows us to guess his ferocious despair of failure and the failure of despair.

May 1, 1920, the Milan Socialists inaugurated the 'Avanti' building—ceremony, fête and banquet. One of the orators, Morgari, speaking of the former directors of *l'Avanti*, declared that to all of them he sent his cordial salutation *except to the one who spat in the plate he had eaten from*.

Mussolini made a furious reply:

'The hatred of these people against me [he wrote in an editorial of May 5] can be explained: I am keeping the promise I made the evening of my violent expulsion. I will be implacable, I said, and these five years I have not given them a moment of respite. And I shall not interrupt my work, for I hope to ruin the reputation, already considerably shaken, of the Socialist party.'

After having indicated the principal symptoms, which in his opinion marked a crisis in revolutionary ideologies, he concluded:

'We alone, individualists, can give ourselves the luxury of receiving, with a sentiment of mingled irony and pity, the bleatings of the sheep weary of waiting for the paradise which they will never see, while we enjoy the certainty that the day of our complete vengeance is at hand.'

Hatred, despair, vengeance! Nothing different. That explains his perpetual changes. He is a poser

and an exhibitionist. He has esteem for no one, and seeks a way out through equivocal operations.

In April 1920 the metal-workers agitated against the legal time.\* Nitti insisted on it. Discipline was disordered. In Turin events threatened to become grave.

Did the Fascists intend to revolt? No.

Providence had not yet revealed Mussolini to himself. The saviour of Italy, instead of brandishing arms against those 'paid with Russian gold,' as might be expected, on the contrary chanted the praises of Satan and poured oil on the flames—a thing he always excels in. And this in spite of the many people who understood this inconsistency and the interested purpose of all his gestures.

Let everyone who loves the truth read this piece of prose in the manner of Ravachol, published in the *Popolo d'Italia*, April 6, 1920—a period during which every word had to be weighed out of deference to the Red atmosphere that people were breathing in those days:

'The question of the legal time, which on the rebound has brought with it that of illegal time (which after all is the only legal one, according to the laws that regulate the universe as discovered by astronomers) is a serious affair, much more serious than those who jeer at it think. For myself, I say (excuse the solemnity of the I) that we are face to face with the first great revolution of the Italian people against those who govern them. It is not a revolt but a veritable revolution. Here is a decree of the government

\* Daylight-saving time.

which up to the present remains a dead letter. The people do not obey it, they ridicule it: they measure time in the ancient manner or (what is altogether charming) they do not measure time at all. The hour for the night is given by the stars, for the day by the sun, and by intuition when there are neither stars nor sun.

'The fault of the government authorities is evident. It is gross, and what is more, irreparable. In the same sense that the Croats of 1848 did not succeed in imposing the use of tobacco on the people of Milan, so Nitti is in a piteous position in the face of this insurrection.

'And now Nitti has to defend himself against the accusation of having been incapable, confronted by the Red tide; worse, of having been its wilful accomplice. We think, on the contrary, that he has been a good policeman for the Monarchy, which to-day at any rate rewards him worthily.'

Having analysed the different tendencies manifested in the question of legal time, Mussolini reveals his own. In effect he says:

I too am against legal time, because the principle represents a form of intervention and of coercion on the part of the State. I am not making a political question of this, a Nationalist or utilitarian question: I am a partisan for the Individual, and I am launched in a campaign against the State. Those individuals who are in perpetual revolt against the State, not against this or that type of State, but against the principle of statehood, form an active minority who have no illusions about its destiny. The State with its formidable bureaucratic machine gives you



the sensation of smothering. The State was bearable for the Individual when it was content to be soldier or policeman. But to-day the State is everything at once: it is banker, usurer, croupier, navigator, capitalist, insurance agent, postman, tobacco merchant, and other things besides, as well as the offices which it already held—police, judge, tax-collector.

To-day the State, a Moloch with terrifying faces, sees all, controls all, does all, and does everything wrong. Every function of the State is a disaster. Disastrous State art, disastrous State schools, State post offices, State navigation, State commodities.

This litany could go on indefinitely. If men could only understand the abyss awaiting them, the number of suicides would be considerably augmented.

(In Italy they are at present very much more numerous than before.) But listen to him to the end. If I reproduce these lines it is not so much to show up his demagogy, which consisted in being Redder than the Reds, but to understand the state of exasperation to which the certainty of his moral isolation was leading him—an isolation which could only be compared with that of a person infected with the plague.

Here is the conclusion of his article:

‘The State is a terrifying machine which swallows living men and throws them up dead, like numbers. Human life has nothing secret or intimate left to it, either in the spiritual or material domain. The smallest corners are explored, the slightest movement tabulated. Each person is pigeon-holed and numbered as in

a slave galley. 'This is the great curse which has oppressed the human race since far off days, when they felt their way gropingly: to have created through the centuries 'the State,' only to succumb beneath its weight.

'If the revolt against the legal time were a supreme effort of revolt against the coercion of the State, a ray of light would then filter into our despairing individualist souls. But probably there will not be such a way out. We too are vowed to sacrifice. So much the worse.

'Down with the State in any form, no matter what its incarnation. The State of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow, the bourgeois State and the Socialist State.

'There remains to us, the last survivors of Individualism, in order to go through the present night and that of to-morrow, the religion of Anarchy alone—an anachronistic religion for our day, but how consoling!'

How many years of imprisonment would be given in Italy to-day to one who addressed a millionth part of these truths to a State that has attained the perfection of folly—a perfection which Mussolini cursed at that time?

'The present night' and 'the dark to-morrow'—these phrases show how much he was conscious of being a good-for-nothing, a veritable wreck, a back number. There remained to him then only the consolation of Anarchy.

But it is very possible that our marionette may have put his money on another card in chanting his hymn to Anarchy, and to Individualism. These lucubrations date from the spring of 1920. And there is a

detail which must not be forgotten: it is exactly at this period that there appeared in Italy for the first time an Anarchist daily *Umanita Nova*, which into the bargain was directed by a powerful personality, that of Errico Malatesta. When this man came back to Italy some months before, Mussolini welcomed him (but without any response from him) saying that he held him in special veneration. Certainly Malatesta had been his friend up to 1914. But in 1920 Mussolini's emissaries worked hard to make it believed that in the last analysis Malatesta and Mussolini were on good terms.

That was a gross deception on the part of this unscrupulous imposter, in order to persuade people for a time that he had the support of the old Internationalists.

Out of that came his misplaced ardour in favour of Anarchy. He deceived himself, however. His trick was too crude not to be discovered. Less than six months after, while Malatesta and I were in prison, he took advantage of a bomb explosion in Milan, to shower on Malatesta all the most vulgar insults, calling him 'a sadist drinker of human blood'—a man who was powerless to defend himself.

## CHAPTER XII

### MUSSOLINI'S PROGRAMME

*Thermidor in Black Shirt—Railroad Strikes—Salutes for  
Malatesta and Charges Against the King.*

LET us admit that Mussolini did finally launch a programme; then perhaps he will spare us the favour of castor-oil. That anyway is what he wanted people to understand after the War!

Well, we are generous enough to concede that all the programmes were represented in his, in the same sense that all the animals are represented at the slaughter-house. But even though it was only the semblance of a programme, it had to be given a backing. The Fascists proceeded then to an agreeable *mélange* of the writings of philosophers, poets, heroes and politicians, all of an indisputable reputation: Sorel, Gentile, d'Annunzio, Proudhon, Mazzini, Macchia-velli, Bergson, Bismarck, etc. They promulgated the aphorism that a unity of ideas was a disease proper only to old-fashioned parties, timid and vile, and deprived of geniuses such as Mussolini, Farinacci, and Dumini.

You will imagine perhaps that at this period the struggle against the Radical parties would be resumed, and that henceforth they would begin the dance over 'the decayed corpse of liberty'; would exhume de Maistre, and castigate the liberal tendencies of the

nineteenth century, and the immortal principles of 1789? Not at all: moreover you may judge for yourself.

I have under my eyes the *Popolo d'Italia* of March 30, 1919 (remember these dates), and of March 26, 1920. In the course of two articles, written a year apart, Mussolini comments on and commemorates the first Fascist assembly held in 1919, whose anniversary is to-day a national fête. He exalts the revolutionary spirit and programme of Fascism. You will say that this aggressive language is characteristic of the Duce, and that he always uses it, even when he celebrates the concession of a part of Rome to the Pope. But if the form is always the same, how different the spirit! Here is the statement of the innovations which Mussolini finally presented as the postulate to Fascism:

'Institution of technical national councils modelled after those praised by Kurt Eisner in Bavaria.

A National assembly to fix the form of government to be given to the State.

Abolition of the Senate.

Substitution of a national militia for the standing army.

A heavy progressive tax on capital having the character of a veritable partial appropriation of all wealth.

The confiscation of all property belonging to religious congregations and the abolition of salaries to bishops.

The revision of all contracts for war supplies, and the deduction of 85 per cent. from war profits.'

There is lacking in this manifesto a paragraph relating to agrarian problems. We find it, however, under the signature of Mussolini in *Il Popolo d'Italia* (April 11, 1920):

'The deputies should understand that they cannot adjourn before having given an agrarian constitution to Italy.'

Here is a programme in the manner of Herriot grafted on to a programme in the manner of Combes.

Let us look only at the fiscal side of the manifesto: 'A heavy progressive tax on capital.'

It was through a similar programme that half a dozen French ministries fell, from May 1924 to the end of 1926, executed by high finance, which, finally victorious, placed the Radicals (who nevertheless had been victorious at the polls) at the bidding of the head of the national *bloc*—we mean Poincaré.

Thus spoke Zarathustra when he was not afraid of playing the solitary guitarist by the light of the moon. But, what he wanted above all, and what he was obstinately seeking, was a way to tempt fortune, if only to prove by his attitude that he aspired to a political candidature.

But you will tell me that the man in the street knew all this. How could he know it and what could he know?

He was told only one thing, and he believed it: 'Italy was the prey of Anarchy; everyone was fleeing. Mussolini alone was watching and was saving the country.'

It is the moment to draw a parallel with Cæsar again: 'Veni, vidi, vici.'

It is simple and clear!

If you are not persuaded, read Camille Aimard, director of a French reactionary paper which was considered serious and as having prestige. Here is the light under which he presents the question in his book, *Bolshevism or Fascism*:

'In the general disarray of minds it sufficed for one man to face the revolutionary torrent, in order for all resisting forces, scattered over the nation (and who were ignorant of each other) to gather around him.'

Do you really believe that the poor French peasant, working ten hours a day and more, who had never been in Italy, who had no other opinion than that of his newspaper, if he read one at all—do you really believe that this unlucky brother in misery to so many other millions in the same predicament, could contradict this man Aimard?

Is it not, however, conceivable that Aimard's faith in this buffoonery was increased because he heard it repeated during a sojourn in Italy, which he made for the sole purpose of currying favour with the 'Duce'?

I have promised, however, to give the common man the necessary elements and the proper facts, to furnish him with a solid opinion based on the truth. Then I shall have done my duty.

But, you are going to object, the programme that Mussolini espoused in 1919-20 was good or bad

according to different tastes; but it was especially designed to be measured on grounds of parliamentary legality; while on the other hand, in Italy at this time, the mass of Socialists, Bolsheviks, and extremists of all kinds, went down to the public square to manifest their loyalty to the Red flag; and it was at this precise moment that Mussolini . . .

I understand your objection and I am going to answer it: your thesis is that Mussolini certainly betrayed his legitimate Radical programme; but that he has the credit of having stopped Italy on the fatal incline of a revolution.

Let us examine the facts:

In the spring of 1919 there occurred in Italy powerful demonstrations against the high cost of living. We do not for a moment hesitate to admit that they were violent and contagious, and we even add that they might have been employed for much more historic aims.

Doubtless you believe that this was the moment chosen by Mussolini to appear for the first time (on horseback or on bicycle) at the head of his troops in order to bring peace back to his country?

If it had been thus, I would say nothing more. It was already very late, but in doing this, 'Providence' would at least have been half-way reinstated. Well, things happened in a very different way, and one that tolerates no contradiction. For Mussolini not only could not keep silent (does he even know how?) but he wrote also, and the written words remain.

Here is what he wrote, June 10, 1919, in the *Popolo d'Italia*:



'The cash boxes are empty. Who then must fill them? Certainly not us, who possess neither houses, nor automobiles, nor factories, nor bank-notes; those who can must pay. Here is what we propose now to the treasury: either the owners shall themselves be dispossessed, or if not, we shall convoke the mass of veterans to march against these obstacles and overthrow them. Those who have not given their blood must give their money.'

The same paper published a manifesto of the Central Committee of Fasci signed by Longoni, Cesare Rossi and Michele Bianchi. It is stated among other things:

'The Central Committee proclaims its solidarity with all those in revolt against the extortionists. It applauds the initiative of the popular summons, and it undertakes to announce and support demonstrations.'

In the same number Mussolini writes:

'It is not the official Socialist party that has directed these demonstrations. . . . On our side we have reason to know that absolutely they have their foundation in the protestation of the people.'

And the next day in the leading article in the same paper:

'It is justice that the people are thinking of, in their simple way. I even hope that in applying their sacred right, the mob will not content itself with striking at the property of the criminals, but that it will begin by striking at the individuals

themselves. A few monopolists hung to the lamp posts would serve as an example.'

In Italy at a certain moment everyone was accused of Bolshevism: Giolitti was the Bolshevik of the *Annunziata*,\* Nitti that of the Amnesty.

We have nothing to say for the political action of Nitti. He created the Royal Guard which committed frequent assassinations among the people during the years 1919-20; but it is just to recognize that those could not in any sense sustain comparison with the massacres and the man-hunts practised later by the Black Shirts.

But let us see what truth there is in the credit claimed by Fascism in its struggle against the Bolshevism of this ex-minister.

Nitti himself denied the Fascist accusations, thus aggravating his case; for it would have been more honourable of him to have been proud of them:

'It has been said [Nitti wrote in his book, *Peace*, published by the deceased Gobetti at Turin] that I made an amnesty for deserters, whereas I had simply pardoned by amnesty one million, one hundred thousand men, who had done their duty in the War, and who had been condemned for trivial reasons or none at all. But I took care to exclude from the amnesty the real deserters; and that with much more severity than any other country in Europe.'

The ministers and those of ministerial mind are above all others enemies to the real enemies of war; but let us pass that by.

\* *Annunziata*, the highest order of knights in Italy to-day.

Let us see rather what our supermen thought of the amnesty. A first decree of military amnesty was signed in February 1919, by the minister Orlando. Mussolini declared himself very well satisfied.

‘On the whole [he wrote], this decree satisfies the national conscience.’

Soon after, he made himself the promoter of an agitation for an enlargement of the amnesty. He wrote:

‘An amnesty uniting so many condemnations inflicted often without great justice, and always under the rule of a tragic and transitory necessity, as was the case during the War in the military tribunals, is an act of humanity which everyone has a right to claim.’\*

He wrote, after the Nitti amnesty:

‘The decree of amnesty is not perfect. It is regrettable that it should have excluded infringements of discipline, which deserved to benefit by it even more than desertions.’

Undoubtedly the year 1919 was fertile in strikes. In September a general strike of the metal-workers took place. Mussolini’s paper made an appeal for funds to aid the strikers.

The year 1920 began in his paper with these words:

‘We desire a fight to the finish for the equalization of wages, the increase of indemnities for night work and hazardous occupations, the creation of indemnity for forced change of residence,

\* From the book of Carlo Aversa Guardieri, *Fascism*, published by the poor Gobetti (Fascist victim), Turin, 1925.

the recognition of professional rights for post and telegraph servants. We proclaim aloud our rights in the face of the counterfeiters of patriotism and the war-profiteers.'

What pacifist sermons for a Camille Aimard, if they were to be spread to-day in France by a man in authority, a man of the order of the Duce—a saviour of the bourgeoisie!!!

Certainly the year 1919 was not a calm year. There was above all the railroad strike. Who, among those living then in Italy, did not feel the horror of it?

What tourist travelling to-day in Italy does not come away with a portrait of Mussolini, celebrating the punctuality of the train service?

How ingenious it all is!

There could be plenty to say on this score. If the representatives of the railroad unions could speak, they would relate how time and again they were called in great haste by the ministers directing some labour commission, in order to enlighten them and their inspectors and secretaries as well—all of them incapable of adjusting railroad service to the needs of normal life after the War.

To understand one had to see for oneself the troubles, the disturbances, the depredations affecting the whole system because of the almost exclusive use, during nearly five years, of fixed and rolling stock for military purposes. I am not speaking of the railroads of Southern Italy where the traffic was very much reduced, and where aside from a few special luxury trains, no one cared whether the trains were on time or not. But in Northern Italy on the contrary the trains were one of the principal auxiliaries of the army.

Especially after the affair of Caporetto, everything was in disorder, and it all became perfectly incomprehensible. The soldier is essentially destructive. One has to realize the situation. The railway hands were soldiers, the railroads became artillery bases. Although exempt from active service, the employees led the life of the barracks: the stations were barracks, the trains a prolongation of the barracks.

In a word the service was a military service.

Out of it there followed such confusion after the War, that, if the railroad men had not been sure of their duties by routine, improvising expedients on the spot, or prompted by their technical knowledge or by directions given them by their unions—if, on the contrary, they had wanted to wait for 'orders' and 'superior instructions,' not only would the trains have been late, but worse than that, they would not have arrived at all. And the railway disasters, which were already a perpetual nightmare to travellers and to the post-war train crews, would have become much more frequent. A reorganization was necessary. But how many were the interests opposed to it! How many ignorant superintendants, suffering from wounded pride, blocked the way on principle! How many bureaucratic neglects and delays! Hence the bungled service, hence the strikes which sometimes served to sustain the claims of the employees—claims which always brought with them practical plans for ending the after-war chaos.

Let alone other considerations, no one can affirm that any other government, in the place of Nitti, could have avoided the same difficulties, the disorganization and the strikes. And if to-day the foreigner can say

that the trains are on time, he must not forget that the struggles and the efforts toward organization, to which the personnel and the government of that time contributed, each one in his sphere, all counted for a great deal.

To conclude, let us refer again to an opinion which cannot truly be suspected of heresy. Speaking of the railroad disturbances, *Il Popolo d'Italia* said that 'the responsibility for the evils afflicting the railroads is not that of the workers, but of circumstances' (January 20, 1919).

\*

But let us get on and examine the insults destined for the King.

On November 28, following the Socialist manifestation which took place in the Chamber of Deputies in the presence of the King, and which was limited to a few shouts of 'Long live Socialism!' and to the singing of the 'International,' Mussolini wrote:

'A Socialist demonstration is nothing to move us. . . . As to the question of what form of government, our paper has clearly expressed its opinion, and a large part of our readers have a purely Republican spirit, considering the Republic as a means of realizing the free institutions to which the Italian people will inevitably attain.'

\*

Now we arrive at the period of Malatesta's return. 'Malatesta'! A name to make those in authority tremble! He was an agitator who never worked through lawful means.

To the numerous honest people who devotedly

absorb prose in the manner of Camille Aimard, to the common people who cannot know, who have not time to check up, I advise the reading of the lines with which the Duce received the return of Malatesta into Italy. It was a rain of praise with which Malatesta did not want to be annoyed, and which he avoided acknowledging.

This is what Mussolini wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia* of December 27, 1919:

'We do not know if the fact of having been an Interventionist, and having had the courage to boast of it, has been sufficient to provoke the excommunication of a former Anarchist agitator. Probably he is much less of an intransigent than the stupid and unlucky hirelings of the Socialist party. We are far from his [Malatesta's] ideas, because we no longer believe in the possibility of a terrestrial paradise installed by legislation and machine-guns; because we have another conception of life and of doctrines, entirely individualist. But that does not prevent us—we who are always ready to admire men who profess their opinions disinterestedly, and who do not hesitate to die for them—from sending a cordial salutation to Malatesta.'

Could there still be a man so simple as to believe in the nonsense given out by the valets of Mussolini?

We have not finished yet; the end is the best.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FIUME IMBROGLIO

*Fiume or Death—Glorification and Abandonment of Fiume, and of d'Annunzio—Embezzlement of Funds—Anti-parliamentarism, Electoral Springboard.*

I SHOULD like to have developed chronologically the labour events from 1919 to 1920, ending in the occupation of the factories. But on top of these events was grafted the Fiume affair, too important in its consequences for us to delay longer its exposition. Besides, a little variety will do no harm; and it is there that we must find the explanation of events that precipitated Fascism. For Fiume was the Mecca or the Moscow of Fascism. If you will allow the comparison, d'Annunzio was the Lenin, and Mussolini the Zinovieff of the delegation to Milan.

I shall not tire of repeating to the reader: look out for dates! For Fascism relies precisely on the ease with which these dates can be confused, thanks to which time becomes its ally. With us truth becomes first cousin to chronological exactitude. Displace only a few dates, and the logical connections of cause and effect will have no meaning.

At the end of September 1920 (the date of the occupation of the factories), Mussolini had already received arms and men from Fiume. Fiume was the



experimental field of the Fascist system of government, directed against the proletariat. It only lacked a pretender to the crown, and the consecrating prelate with his tiara. In spite of all the carnival pomp, and all the pretexts—poses, great gestures, cries of alarm or of victory—in spite of all that, Fascism is debtor to Fiume. Certainly it was not the brain of the author of *Navires* or of *Corrado Brando* which was lacking in imagination or embarrassed by scruples.

Fiume served too as a field of fertilization and selection for all the riff-raff of the War, incapable of going back to work, and for whom 'heroism' became a more or less lucrative profession.

Finally it was from Fiume that there came in 1919, the first idea for the March on Rome. Of course, it was a question then of an enterprise which had nothing to do with revolution, but which kept a middle course between revolt within the palace and martial law.

It had after all a less farcical character than the royal march on Rome in 1922, for at least it had the courage of being directed against the monarchy.

It was Mussolini who opposed this project. He admits it, moreover, in the following lines:

'I was among those who advised against the d'Annunzio march on Rome. And it is true that there existed a kind of club in Fiume which denounced me as a traitor to Italy, because they learned that I advised against a march of any kind. I held that since popular opinion was on the point of declaring itself, it was not the moment to disturb it by a violent act which could do more harm than good. I meant, moreover, to have this opinion of mine approved by a Fascist

collective address—an address which would not be published.\*

Diplomacy of the politician in dire need of electoral propaganda! Attitude of the weather vane, oscillating between a Republic and a Monarchy—an attitude explaining the hatred which Mussolini nursed against those Fascists who put all their money on the Republic!

The electoral period was then at its height. These elections (December 1919) recall two facts, closely linked, moreover: an accusation of misappropriation of funds against Mussolini, and his sham arrest.

Mussolini supported his candidature in Milan by armed men. Naturally justice closed its eyes. Two editors of the *Popolo d'Italia*, Capodivacca and Rossati, developed scruples. Persuaded that the funds received for the babies of Fiume had been partially deflected from their destination, they resigned from the paper. The affair ended in litigation relative to the payment of professional indemnities, which came before the trades council of the Press Association of Milan.

Mussolini was obliged to admit the truth of misappropriation of funds.

In his paper, the leading article of February 3, 1920, says:

‘The Fascist electoral *bloc* conducted its campaign exclusively with its own money, and not with that of Fiume. . . .’

\* Extract from a stenographic record (published by the *Popolo d'Italia* of February 3, 1920) of the trades council of the Press Association of Milan concerning the affair between Mussolini and his editors, Rossato and Capodivacca.

But then he adds:

‘Certain contributions, some ten thousands of liras, served to pay the legionnaires arrived in Milan from Fiume and from other Italian towns, and who formed what were called “armed bands,” who stood at my orders.’

One could not be more precise. He spoke again, moreover, of these famous ‘armed bands’ before the same trades council referred to above:

‘We must distinguish between two periods, that of April 15 to May 15, which was really the period of squads belonging to the *Popolo d’Italia*. There were twenty to twenty-five “Arditi” who mounted guard over the paper.

‘And now let us speak of the other squads. The fact is, as I said before the examining magistrate, that during the last week of the electoral campaign, there came from Fiume some ten squads of “Arditi,” officers and marines. There were in all several hundred men divided into sections, commanded by officers, and who naturally all obeyed me. I was in fact the chief of this little army; it is true that these men were paid—they received a daily wage of from 20 to 25 lire.’

Is not that confession enough to send a man to the Court of Assizes?

If he took such a chance, it was because he knew he was protected by hidden powers. Under those conditions he could play the bully, and pass as courageous.

Thanks to these rumours of armed squads, of personal companies and armies, he was arrested, but released the same night. Nitti hardly allowed him

time to smell the bad odours of the prisons of San Fedele and San Vittore.

His electoral defeat had made Mussolini ridiculous (he had scarcely had a thousand votes) and already a void was forming around him in the ranks of his partisans.

You must not believe that public opinion exerted pressure on the Government to prevent the detention of our adventurer, who had shown a spiritless and cowardly attitude before the police coming to arrest him at his newspaper office. It was the Government who weakened.

But to return to the funds raised for Fiume. The question was, did d'Annunzio have the right to authorize the use of this money, received through public subscription for the children of Fiume, for election purposes?

We cite the following lines from the *Italian Democracy* of June 30, 1925:

'If d'Annunzio gave up imprisoning Mussolini, it was that for one thing he thought his arrest was not opportune; and for another that he approved of Mussolini's action. Nevertheless the latter will never be able to wash away his shame for having been both a parasite and a traitor to the cause of Fiume.'

Those who used this language knew their man, for they had participated in the Fiume affair.

\*

You are very soon going to understand why he was called traitor by his former allies.

The metal-workers' conflict, which had to result

in the occupation of the factories, had hardly terminated (September 1920) when Giolitti, who had succeeded Nitti as head of the Government some months before, wanted to have done with d'Annunzio and the Fiume affair. This was a manœuvre of clever politics. The mass of labour was defeated, the Socialist party had lost a portion of its effective forces, following the Communist schism at Leghorn; demoralization reigned in the ranks of the proletariat. The moment then was well-chosen for Giolitti to regulate the Fiume affair, conforming to the terms of the Rapallo treaty signed with Yugoslavia.

There was only one man who could have opposed the government policy: that was Mussolini. It was his moral duty to defend d'Annunzio, and to stir up his Fascist bands in the Italian interior, in order to prevent the government from taking action against Fiume. But Giolitti understood Mussolini, and knew very well that it was neither love nor friendship that occupied his mind, but always hatred—his hatred against his former comrades, against the party he had betrayed for the War, and against the Italian proletariat, who did not want to recognize him any more, and who for the most part detested him! This is the moment when Fascism underwent a profound transformation. It rapidly became an invincible force. Little drops make an oil spot and spread over a wide area. Fascism carried everything before it like an avalanche.

What was it that happened? To understand it, one has first to comprehend the attitude of Mussolini towards Fiume, and of d'Annunzio at the moment when Giolitti resolutely attacked the latter.

Toward Christmas, 1920, Giolitti gave orders to General Caviglia to proceed with the blockade of Fiume.

D'Annunzio declared himself ready for the struggle. He protested. He called on his partisans in Italy to prove their solidarity with him. Great disillusionment was in store for him. Mussolini never stirred. He never made a single protest. The Fascists of Italy observed the most complete silence. A few cries of 'Long live Fiume!' and that was all.

On December 22, 1920, while General Caviglia had already given his ultimatum to d'Annunzio, who had a right to expect support from the man of whom he could soon say ironically 'the great man of the Via Paolo del Cannobio is diminishing'—on that day Mussolini was content to offer in his paper these timid considerations, worthy of the dullest and most circumspect of politicians:

'It may very well be that when these lines appear they will have been outdated by events. At the moment of writing we do not know what the tenor of the reply given by d'Annunzio to the ultimatum of General Caviglia will be. Yet if one takes into account the statements made by Giolitti to the deputy De Nava, president of the parliamentary commission for foreign affairs, it seems that events ought not to take a very tragic turn. Giolitti may have declared that the Fiume situation should cause no alarm. This truly Olympian optimism is in contrast to Caviglia's note, and to the ultimatum which fell due some hours ago. Our opinion on the question of Fiume agrees exactly with that of the Honourable Vassallo, Popular Catholic deputy: Vassallo no

more than the others does not contest that the Rapallo treaty must be executed. What Vassallo finds strange is the precipitation which the government brings to its execution. We are of the same opinion, and this is the point of view which we have more than once declared and defended.'

This is very tepid language for a partisan, especially at the precise moment when he should have gone to the energetic defence of his allies. It is the language of a man pretending to be deaf and blind in order to ignore a reality which would oblige him to prove loyal and courageous by defending, arms in hand, the weak against the strong.

But villain that he was he came to terms secretly with Giolitti. His treachery in this case was immeasurable.

In Italy Giolitti feared serious opposition to the attack on Fiume from no one except Mussolini. Knowing the hatred the latter held for Socialists he wanted to make use of it to weaken them (but not to destroy them). He hoped thus to make them less intractable in Parliament and to convince them of the necessity of supporting his ministry. Giolitti therefore gave *carte blanche* to Mussolini to attack the Socialists and the labour organizations, in exchange for which Mussolini allowed a free hand to Giolitti in the Fiume affair.

And that is why d'Annunzio waited in vain for Mussolini's protest.

Giolitti's scheme might have worked, if behind Mussolini there had been only Giolitti and his manœuvres. But behind Mussolini were also, and

especially, Giolitti's enemies, who feared the application of the financial projects he had presented to the Chamber: progressive tax on income; titles to stocks only by name; general revision of war bonuses;\* abolition of Article 5 of the Constitution, in order to transfer to the Chamber the right of peace and war—a right which belonged to the King. They composed that clique of war profiteers and metal magnates who had launched d'Annunzio in his enterprise, and who already controlled finance and the more important press. These men let Mussolini associate with Giolitti as long as the two of them combated Socialism and the working class.

But on the day when Giolitti believed he could put an end to Fascist violences against the workmen, in order to gain the elections, and realize a ministry of large collaboration, composed of radicals like Turati and Don Sturzo, and perhaps of some reactionaries capable of moderating and parliamentarizing Fascism—that day, I insist, the pirates of high finance, in agreement with the generals in need of a post-war policy allowing them to fish in troubled waters, and in agreement also with the Duke d'Aosta and his clique, decided that Fascism must pursue to the end its reactionary course. And this was not only against the Socialists and the extreme Left, but also against the Republicans, the Democrats, and the Populist-Catholics of Don Sturzo. In brief, against all the forces, which, reunited, could have impeded an Imperialist policy outside the country, and a parallel reaction inside the country.

\* There is a measure which should have landed in prison a good number of great patriots.



Mussolini himself had not foreseen that his movement would take on such amplitude. He would have been content at this moment with the office of deputy, permitting him to take his revenge on his Socialist ex-comrades, and obliging them to agree that there was a new force to be reckoned with.

You must not ask me to give you the proof, documents in hand, of the alliance between Mussolini and Giolitti at the moment of the assault on Fiume. You will not find it in any archives, and even men like Bonomi and his associates, who were in the secret, but who became enemies of Mussolini after he had demolished them, have no interest in revealing how they were steeped in these doings. But the facts speak for themselves. Giuseppe de Falco, an ex-friend of Mussolini, who directed the *Popolo d'Italia* during the War years, writes in his book on Fascism:

‘Many people, and particularly the former legionnaires from Fiume think that a veritable pact existed between Mussolini and Giolitti. As a matter of fact, on October 20, 1920,\* the army staff sent a circular to all military units, in which the constitution of the ‘Fasci’ was announced, with a recommendation to uphold *them*. After this decree numerous recruits of army officers were registered in the Fascist ranks. One must also note that it was after the crash of d’Annunzio’s Fiume enterprise that there began the Fascist expeditions against the Labour Exchanges, the Co-operatives, etc.—expeditions

\* Remember the dates: one month after the occupation of the factories, two months before the attack on Fiume.

which multiplied to the point of creating a veritable terror.\*

Let us hear now the voice of a man who, though very far from revolutionary ideas, was one of Mussolini's victims. Let us listen to the unfortunate Gobetti,† a man of rare talent, a Liberal Monarchist who did not want to have anything to do with Fascism. Gobetti wrote in his journal, *The Liberal Revolution*, November 1924:

'In the period of Giolitti, layman though he was, the Fascist movement became governmental. It was at this moment that the *Fasces* insinuated themselves into the barracks of the carabinieri: by decree, all the carabinieri on leave were thrown into Fascist formations. It was at this period that a student having taken part in Fascist expeditions found himself singled out by the police, and received the Fascist cap with the felicitations of the authorities. It was at this moment that in Democratic prefectures they organized the elections by aid of a "Fascio"; that Black Shirts and carabinieri mingled in the police wagons; that justice distributed centuries of prison to innocent anti-Fascists, and centuries of absolution to Fascists convicted of Fascism.'

One more year of bloody struggle between the two forces face to face, and the proletariat will have been vanquished in its last attempt at rebellion—the general

\* G. de Falco, *Fascism as seen by the Republicans and the Socialists*, Library of Social Studies, directed by R. Mondolfo.

† Gobetti was flogged several times by the personal order of Mussolini. The signed orders were published later by the former secretary of the Duce (Fasciolo). He took refuge in Paris, completely worn out, and died there in 1926.

strike ordered by the Federation of Labour. A strike which Fascism had time and means to prepare to subdue, in the way that it did—that is to say, by military force.\* From then on it was the struggle of the earthen pot against the iron pot.

Fascism became at one and the same time an army, a police force and a court of magistrates. It was even more than that; it was also jailer and employer; and above all executioner of everyone.

Fascism put down the general strike by Colonial terrorist methods in the first days of August 1922. It sought by its action to give the death blow to the Liberal government presided over by that sinister imbecile who went by the name of Facta, more than it did to disorganize the Socialists and Revolutionists, who were henceforth crushed anyway.

In these days, moreover, Turati could be seen getting as near as he could to the Quirinal, but on his part he also was too late.

Under such conditions events were bound to take shape as they did.

The proletariat had more and more difficulty in defending itself, while attack became increasingly easier for the Fascists. Some day the world will know how many of those 'heroic' sensational deeds on which Mussolini has banked for years—Mussolini always attached to fountains of blood like a child to its mother's breast—were willed and executed by his men.

\* It is interesting to note that this general strike was so little 'bolshivist' that the Catholic Populists made part of the movement, with the deputy Miglioli at their head, and Don Sturzo in the wing. It was a little like what happened in Germany against the Kapp 'putsch.'

Fascism overflowed. Mussolini, always in Milan, incited the party to run riot. Occasionally he would save appearances by writing a 'moderator's' article. This is not the place to give the history of the various alliances with Fascism effected by the agrarians, the police, the magistrates, the clergy, the war riff-raff, the survivors of the Fiume adventure, the important press; and in the political camp by a great number of Liberals, Democrats, Populists and Republicans. All this fine world hoped to fish in troubled waters, each one finding particular satisfaction when his neighbour was crushed. But Fascism rewarded them by treating like 'bolsheviks' anyone who gave them the slightest reason for a beating with the club they had not worn out on the back of the Radical parties.

During all this time Mussolini never left Milan. Through his paper he gave "tone" to the crimes of his bands.

The list of offences was so long, the massacres so fabulous, the scenes of horror so atrocious, that in a short while, to kill became an inexorable rule. Impossible to reverse, for the lake of blood which the Fascists left behind them was such that the least sign of weakness on their part would have been fatal to them.

There remained to Fascism no other salvation except to seek the exercise of absolute power. Mussolini knew the proletariat and the strength of resistance in a revival of their ideas. He foresaw then, that even one moment of Liberalism could give to their forces, apparently destroyed, the possibility of becoming all of a sudden imposing. He knew that in such an event there would no longer be place in Italy or outside for the sanguinary squads of his Duminis of city and country.

Giolitti naturally did not foresee that affairs would go so far: nor did he want them to. No, a few good lessons were sufficient for him: one for the Socialists, to persuade them to work with him, and to destroy them in the Chamber, and thus acquire a better parliamentary balance; the other to the proletariat to teach them to use more moderation in their acts.

It was only to this end that the crafty politician, which Giolitti was, had given *carte blanche* to Mussolini in his action against the Reds, at a time when he wished to accomplish his guilty neutrality in the matter of the attack on Fiume.

Later in the elections of 1921, in sending Mussolini and a large number of his ferocious deputy-eaters to the Chamber, thanks to the liberal electoral Fascist *bloc*, Giolitti believed he could parliamentarize Fascism and its leader; just as happened in 1900 with the Socialists, and after 1870 with the Republicans. But that scheme could not succeed in this case, because Parliamentarism could not act like a brake on Fascism, as it can on revolutionary labour movements.

In going to the Chamber, Fascism had another weapon at its disposal, and for that reason did not have to give in at all to the old regime.

Nevertheless Mussolini at this date would not have believed in the prophecy of his future successes. He attributed to himself only a limited role. Here is what he wrote in the *Popolo d'Italia*, July 2, 1921:

‘The Italy of 1921 is essentially different from the Italy of 1919. This has been said and demonstrated several times. Fascism must not have the air of having arrogated to itself the sole credit for the profound change in the national

situation. Thus limited our merit cannot be contested by any party. To say that a Bolshevik peril still exists in Italy is to want to change into reality certain fears that are not to be acknowledged. Bolshevism is vanquished.'

If you want to know the truth, keep these phrases well in mind—written in 1921 at a time when Mussolini had not yet arrived, nor dreamed of arriving, at power. To-day, after ten supplementary years of terror—the combined result of street brigandage and official repression, which was exercised in the form of prescribed residence, of monopolist censorship of the Press, of the suppression of every common right, and in the form of special tribunals—to-day, after ten long years of tyranny, after Mussolini had busied himself with the labour unions, the schools, the universities, the townships, sport, the vanishing Chamber, the Pope, the foreign service, the *agents provocateurs* like Riciotti Garibaldi, the code, the amnesty for paid assassins in Black Shirts (not to mention his flirtations with the Bolshevik ambassadors at Rome)—all of this a chain stitch to keep Italy bleeding—to-day, I repeat, this maniac and bully without grace of memory, feels the need of proclaiming that his endlessly irregular regime was justified by the existence of a Bolshevik menace.

For years he has sown terror from city to city, village to village. He has had at his disposition money, arms, trucks, and railroads to mobilize his forces and enable him to dissolve and reform them, so that those who worked in any one place were always strangers to that place. These measures were not dictated by the fear that his men might have to answer for mis-

demeanours; it was simply a question of being certain that friendships, family ties, reasons of love or what-not, were not contributing to break the spring of the Black Shirts.

Anti-Fascists, on the contrary, had to act, defend themselves and sometimes attack, always hunted on all sides; in front by the Fascists, behind by the police, and on the flank by the reactionary herd. For us the judiciary reprisals were terrible.

There occurred also up to 1922, the year of the advent of Fascism, condemnations of Fascists; but how rarely! Moreover, Mussolini decreed an amnesty for them in 1923, an amnesty limited to offences having 'national aims,' meaning 'Fascist aims.'

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE OCCUPATION OF THE FACTORIES

*Who gave the Lead?—To the Cellars During the Red Days—Flight Before Danger—Always at the Head of the Flight.*

Is there a single one of the numerous apologists for Mussolini who does not shiver from head to foot at the mere sound of the three words 'occupation of factories.' The taking of Jerusalem by Titus—is it even comparable with the 'massacres' committed by Italian workmen in September 1920?

The legions of Spartacus? The Sicilian Vespers? The Paris Commune? A mere bagatelle—all that!!! It is now that the world will be able to appreciate to the full the role of Mussolini as 'Saviour.'

Such is the refrain of the apologists.

Let us begin by relating the genesis of the affair. 'A little spark lights great flames,' the proverb says.

It was in Dalmine (province of Bergama) that the first attempt at 'occupation' was registered, in the taking over of the metal-works of Franchi Gregorini.

That happened in March 1919. The fact, and especially its novelty, aroused complaints and re-criminations.

What next? Was the decline of the proprietary regime beginning? One might have believed it . . . but . . .



On March 20 an orator from Milan made inflammatory speeches in the factories. He expressed himself in these terms:

‘Because of the shortness of time and the existing circumstances created by Industry, you have not yet been able to prove your capacity in the management of affairs, but you have committed a voluntary act, and I say to you that you are on the right road, because you are freed from your protectors, and because you have chosen men to direct and represent you from the heart of your organizations, and because you have confided to them alone the defence of your rights. I say to you that your gesture is new, and worthy of sympathy, because of the motives that inspire it. I am with you for the defence of your rights, which are *sacrosanct*.’

The fiery demagogue who rushed to bring this ardent support to the rebels, was not Malatesta, nor Bombacci, nor Turati, nor Don Sturzo, nor Amendola, all notoriously Communists or Bolshevists.

It was. . . . But rather let us glance at the information appearing in the *Popolo d'Italia* of March 20, 1919:

‘To-day the working classes of Dalmine, in the course of a significant meeting, again affirmed their rights in the kind of agitation just adopted, and which all of them understand; and vibrated to the impetuous and incisive speech of Benito Mussolini . . . who, according to declarations from the workers themselves, knew how to prove himself as always, the marvellous interpreter of the new proletarian consciousness.’

To continue:

In June 1920 Giolitti succeeded Nitti. His programme appeared to be a kind of revenge for that section of the bourgeoisie who had opposed the War: transfer of the prerogatives of war and peace from the Crown to Parliament; inquiry concerning full powers in time of war; conversion of bearer bonds to allocated bonds. I have explained at length in my book, *Italy Between Two Crispis*\* how the government and the Industrialists, occasionally rivals, counted, each in his own way, on appropriating the advantages of the metal-workers' agitation. The government in order to make the Industrialists disgorge, thanks to the fiscal projects I have already mentioned; the Industrialists in order to have a pretext to claim new customs rights.

At the moment of the occupation of the factories in Milan (August 30) Mussolini's paper made the following comments, over the signature of Michele Bianchi:

'We may say to-day that the occupation of the factories is a formidable error, except in the event that the organizers intend to use it as a springboard toward much greater ends. Will these occupations be the prelude of a social movement? That would be the proof of a very subtle political intelligence. There would be logic to it. But Buoizzi and Guarnieri have too reactionary a mentality.'

Thus spoke the *Popolo d'Italia* on August 31, 1920.

We are face to face with the tide. Who is going to move? Strangely enough not Mussolini.

\* Paris, International Library, 14 Rue Petit.

In a certain number of days about a thousand factories were occupied; not a single village was spared. There were about a million occupants. The example of the workers pushed the peasants into occupying the abandoned lands in Latium and Sicily. No *Jacquerie*; not a single act of sabotage; not a single safe robbed; not a single proprietor molested; not a single burning of private houses or of shops.

I am giving you the facts as they happened, nothing more. It might be said that the workers were too moderate: but events were what they were. There is no argument about that.

Where then occurred the so-called massacres and villainies perpetrated by the workers, which have been used to justify the years of Fascist vandalism, prevailing even to-day, so that Mussolini might affirm that all this time he has been destroying and crushing the Red element?

Everyone recognized that during the occupation a notable decrease in assassinations and in violent conflicts was apparent. There were many less than in previous uprisings, the Red Week included. That does not mean that the situation did not contain the germ of possible revolutionary developments. But that is another question. The same Mussolini, risen to power, has reproached the Socialists for having been cowardly, for not having profited by circumstances. One had to be unscrupulous like him to make such a reproach, at the same moment that he accused them of the worst excesses and the worst intentions.

The fact that the sedition occurred in the factory and not in a public place, and that its character of imposed production made a new form of revolt,

breaking with the old non-productive form of strike, completely changed the aspect of the movement; which, after all, quite in spite of us, did not enter on an insurrectional phase.

In any event work continued. There were tragic episodes, of course, humanly impossible to avoid.

In Turin an engineer (Francesco De Benedetti) killed two workmen, Tomasso Gatti of Barletta, and Raphael Vandick of Brussels, who were mounting guard before the Capiamento factories. There were again two other deaths in the same city, Simula and Sonzini; deaths how valuable to Fascist speculation!

To keep a fair balance between the two adversaries (Proletarian and Fascist) in the chapter of victims and responsibilities, I shall have recourse to the word of one of our class opponents. I refer to an anti-Fascist, more or less Monarchist, from whom we have no hope of revolutionary action against Fascism. There is all the less reason for suspecting this testimony in that it comes from Count Sforza. At a session of the Italian Senate, June 26, 1924, he established the comparative state of forces on the two sides of the barricade:

‘The memory of the assassination of Sonzini and Simula still makes us shudder. But the State intervened, and the guilty are now in prison. Notwithstanding, scarcely had the Honourable Misuri left the Chamber of Deputies, where he was called guilty for saying what he thought, than on the very threshold of parliament, he was struck down. The Deputy Amendola was attacked and wounded in broad daylight in the streets of Rome; the Deputy Forni

was hit in the Milan station in the presence of hundreds of people. The Deputy Gonzales was beaten and wounded in an election meeting at Genoa, together with the national hero Rossetti. Go through the personal records of the president of the Council and in all these affairs you will only find excuses for the aggressors. It is remarkable to discover that for all these deeds, notable because of the standing of the victims, as for all the others that can be verified in the more remote regions of Italy, and which yielded nothing in point of gravity to the first, not a single judiciary proceeding was ordered, and far less was there any kind of condemnation pronounced. When, by chance, some guilty person had been arrested, the Fascist amnesty, which will remain a blot on the history of Italian law, returned him very quickly to liberty.'

\*

By the end of September order was restored. On the 28th of the same month Mussolini published an article entitled 'Epilogue' in which he comments on the outcome of the movement:

'What happened in Italy during the month of September just ending, was a revolution, or if one wants to be more exact, a phase of the revolution which we began in 1915. The more or less romantic scenery, which should be the corollary of revolution according to the ideologies and plans of certain old-fashioned radicals, was not set up. That is, there was neither fighting in the streets, nor barricades; in fact nothing of what constitutes the insurrectional literature which moves us so much through the pages of *Les Misérables*.'

Speaking of the attitude of the Government he added:

'From the police point of view Giolitti was right. Could they have avoided the occupation of the factories? Perhaps. But if such a task was already difficult in the twenty-four hours following the invasion, each day of the occupation made more doubtful the possibility of expelling the workers from the shops by military force. The bad effects produced by this attitude of the Government are certainly grave. But who can say that a forceful method would not have provoked a conflagration infinitely more difficult to extinguish? Even in police strategy, there has to be a quiet inquiry as to whether the game is worth the candle.'

Fear? Opportunism? Charlatanism? Take your choice.

Let the reader, then, go back several chapters, and re-read the windy tirades of the same Mussolini on the subject of the Red Week, in which of course he more or less participated. And you will see by comparison how much the workmen, that is the barbarians, had shown restraint in the occupation of the factories.

In Mussolini's politics you will never find a single bold gesture against a recognized force.

Up to 1920 only sporadic attacks on the part of the Fascists against the Reds are on the records. In the month of March 1919, there occurred the burning of *l'Avanti*, to which the proletariat replied with a general strike.

What did Mussolini do? What did the Fascists do? They kept still and no one noticed their existence.

Up to 1920 it was the Liberal administration which fought against the claims of the people, while making use of their very methods.

If Fascism at that moment had openly declared against the labour forces it might have been considered *an auxiliary force to the State*. By the end of 1920, on the contrary, it was the State that became an auxiliary force of Fascism. Or better still, Fascism was a two-edged weapon which the State put into the hands of a third of the country, charging it to safeguard all future responsibilities.

As for the Duce he was always ready for flight. He only marched when the King called him by telegraph to Rome.

Here are two characteristic episodes of this period:

First, the Fascist carnival-congress in Rome in November 1921. The Roman people resented it and replied by a general strike. For once Mussolini was among the combatants: after all he was a deputy, and hence found himself in Rome.

But instead of leading his iron troops to an attack on the Bolsheviks our man hurried to the Augusteo and harangued his bandits, advising them to retreat. And he asked urgently for special trains from the Bonomi Government, which hastened to give them to him (for the revolutionaries they would have provided prison trains) in order to send these hot-headed Black Shirts back to their homes.

Finally on July 21 the murder of Sarzana! This was one of the rare times when the regular troops fired

on armed Fascists, who fled like a flock of birds at the first discharge of the hunter's gun.

On this occasion our bronze hero again gave the effect of a package of gelatine.

In fact, two weeks after the Sarzana conflict, our general approved and signed in his own hand a pact of non-aggression with the Socialists. He had smelt the odour of powder, and more than that of dry powder.

It was naturally a vast burlesque which could have no outcome. It was a combination quite worthy of the brain of that De Nicola, then president of the Chamber of Deputies, who will go down in history as a prototype of the ambiguous and oscillating statesman.

By this agreement, the contracting parties engaged themselves to respect reciprocally the flag and the labour unions, and exchanged other numerous and diverse guarantees.

In the interest of history, I give the names of the signatories of the said agreement:

Rome, Office of the President of the Chamber at  
Montecitorio, August 3, 1921.

For the parliamentary Fascist group: the Honourable Benito Mussolini, the Honourable Cesare Maria de Vecchi, the Honourable Giovanni Giurati.

For the National Council of the Military Fasces: Cesare Rossi, Umberto Pasella, Gaetano Polverelli, Nicole Sansanelli.

For the Executive of the Socialist party: the Honourable Giovanni Bacci, Emilio Zannerini.

For the parliamentary Socialist party: the



Honourable Elia Musatti, the Honourable Oddino Morgari.

For the general Confederation of Labour: the Honourable Gino Baldesi, Alessandro Galli, Ernesto Caporali.

Endorsed by Enrico De Nicola, President of the Chamber of Deputies. (Advocate.)

Having recovered from his panic, and assured that Bonomi, then president of the Council, would henceforth not be dangerous to him, our great chief of the band gave orders to consider the pact a scrap of paper.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE INFAMIES OF MUSSOLINI AND HIS COMPLICITY IN THE ASSASSINATION OF MATTEOTTI

It remains for us to relate the terror that seized upon Mussolini in the face of the spiritual rebellion provoked by the . . . disappearance of Matteotti.

I shall be as brief as possible, but also I shall be quite as strongly documented.

From the day when Matteotti wrote and published his little volume entitled *A Year of Fascist Domination*,\* a formidable accusation bristling with figures and documents, a veritable stunning blow to Mussolini and to Fascism, Matteotti was condemned.

Here is the warning that *Il Popolo d'Italia* gave in May 1923:

‘As for Matteotti, vulgar charlatan, notorious scamp, and ruffian of the worst sort, he will do well to look out for himself: for if one day he finds himself with a fractured skull, but fractured in a good cause, he will not have the right to complain, after all the ignominies he has written and signed.’

Later, while the crime against Matteotti was preparing in the den of the Fascist *cheka*, the office of the Viminal Press in Rome, they distributed to reporters

\* French edition: *L'Eglantine*, 20 rue de Lengletier, Bruxelles; 32 rue de Grenelle, Paris.

the following note, designed to be 'spontaneously' published:

' . . . The present provocations, extreme and premeditated, which find the height of their expression in Matteotti's speeches, are part of a concerted plan. . . . For these reasons your journal would accomplish an opportune and patriotic service by revealing these proposals, destined seriously to compromise the so-desirable normalization of the national life (in consequence of the inevitable reaction which at the right moment and without reservation it is the duty of the Fascist regime to oppose).'

Notice that this circular is dated June 4, 1924; six days after a man failed to respond to the call of his family and his comrades. Disappeared?

It was thought so in the beginning. Did not the Fascist press even allude to a passport furnished Matteotti by the Ministry? Or again he may have been a victim of the Communists. . . . Perhaps it was an amorous flight . . . yes, they even dared to write that!

Who would ever have pierced the mystery, without the intervention of the *concierge* of 'Lungo Tevere,' who remembered the number of an automobile into which he had seen a man thrown, fighting and crying 'Murder!'

Those were days of fever, of tears forced back, of mortal anxiety. The mystery unhinged the minds of people. It shook up apathy. It brought blasphemies from many who afterwards might have been thought incapable of giving vent to a malediction or shedding a tear.

All of Italy was shaken by a vehement and despairing protest. A woman in mourning went to Mussolini to demand that they should give back to her at least the body of her husband.

All of our dead seemed to grow in greatness and demand this mourning. All of our victims seemed to participate in this lamentation.

It was the decisive hour.

Fascism could not commit an act of repression; that would have been to confess that they were the authors of the crime. If Matteotti had fallen like Di Vagno, Lavagnini, Pilati, Picinnini, Ferrero and a hundred others, openly attacked by Fascist bands (a hundred against one) without mystery, without dissimulation, Mussolini could have applied his old defensive system which consisted of threatening with even worse punishment any who might have the audacity to mourn the dead. But this time the chief of the gang had acted on the sly, using Chekist methods. Matteotti could so simply be called 'disappeared.' Caught in a dilemma, Fascism did not know which way to turn, and found itself completely nonplussed. It disowned its myrmidons, frowned on clever guesses, consoled the widow, and hid the corpse whilst commanding an immediate search.

The situation was reversed overnight.

Fascism was evaporating!

All Italy was on the alert. In other countries the refugees held back their tears and planned to meet in Rome. Mussolini literally shook with fear!

I shall examine here only some of the reasons why a serious action against Fascism did not take place at this moment.

First there was the hope of Parliamentary opposition which banked on the Messianic intervention of the King. It may also have been that Mussolini, yielding to the necessity of equilibrium in the face of discontent in the Fascist camp, sought a weapon of a new kind: the menace of passing into the service of Moscow. On this score, the fact that on June 20, 1924 (ten days after the disappearance of Matteotti) the Stefani Agency (mouthpiece of the government) published the 'good news that Monsieur Rykoff expressed his satisfaction with the admirable order reigning in Italy,' is very significant. Moreover, on July 14, 1924 (one month after the assassination of Matteotti), another communication of the Stefani Agency corroborated the previous one:

'At the Russian Embassy, the Ambassador and Madame Jurenef gave an intimate dinner to the President of the Council, the Honourable Mussolini.'

Here is what Libero Tancredi, whom we have already quoted several times, wrote in the *Quaderni del Nuovo Paese* :

'Mussolini circulated telegrams concerning the intended journey of Matteotti into Austria. Yet all the time he knew that the executors of his orders had already come to the Chigi palace to wash their hands, covered with blood. But as soon as the "deplorable imprudence" (according to the legend) of the disclosure of the fatal automobile number had illumined the mystery, causing universal indignation that mounted like a tide—as soon as this Tambourlaine on a small scale found it impossible to hide his enterprise

any longer, he had only one idea left, to save himself, himself alone, at the expense of everyone, friends and enemies, guilty and innocent. And when the Chamber did not applaud his summary demand for justice against those who had obeyed him, he pushed his cynicism to the point of indulging in a pacific speech, which he pronounced deliberately, after having given the order for the assassination.'

\*

Six months after, our 'Tartufe' had recovered his courage. In fact the opposition failed in its attack; the situation was again beautifully embroiled; the accomplices reduced to silence; the magistrates intimidated. An amnesty project was developed, designed to evade the Matteotti affair, in the course of which might have been produced certain depositions of a nature to compromise Mussolini even further (that of Cesare Rossi, for example). Mussolini blocked the Monarchy in the same fashion as the latter had taken him by the throat previously. This is the moment chosen by our megalomaniac to order a renewal of massacres (end of 1924); after which he presented himself again before the Chambers, assumed again his terrorist ways and pronounced the famous speech, where he defined so well what he was, and what all the world knows he is, even to the depths of the prisons:

'If Fascism is an association of evil-doers, I, myself, am the chief of these evil-doers, and I boast of it.'

Remember that well!

But these braggart's words were preceded by the most ignoble attempts at retreat, the most repulsive of

whitewashings, the most shameful begging of recommendations—a baseness capable of reducing all human dignity to nothing.

This was January 3, 1925, after the massacres in Florence and after two weeks of bloody celebration all over Italy, in the phase that completed the work of the *coup d'état* inaugurated by the March on Rome. The statute of Albertino had been definitely abolished with the complicity of the King.

Mussolini addressed the Chamber with arrogance:

‘Is there one among you who dares to claim his right to denounce me!’

Italy trembled anew. She had scarcely emerged from her ruins, painfully rebuilt. And the Chamber bowed before its ferocious conqueror, and chanted hymns to the glory of the new era.

In the meanwhile Rossi waited always in the prison of Regina Coeli, and the party of the ‘Aventine,’\* registered their embarrassment at Mussolini’s flattery of the King:

‘What has come to be called the party of the Aventine was enticed by, and (it must be confessed), for some time paralysed by the vision of a constitutional restoration, *completely constitutional*, by act of the King. It was the period when the Aventines (if they had not believed in the good will of the King, and if they had had more faith in themselves, in their strength, and in the power of compulsion they could give to the

\* The name for the combination of parties belonging to the opposition, whose resistance was most passive; as they were not a majority it satisfied them to ‘retire to the Aventine hills,’ like the plebeians of ancient Rome, for their revolutionary demonstrations. (Translator’s note.)

Italian people) might have overthrown the Fascist regime. But this would have dragged the Monarchy along with it in its downfall, precisely at the moment when the King might have placed himself in a position to be saved and shown himself worthy of being saved.\*

\* Francesco Ciccotti, *King Victor Emmanuel and Fascism* Publications *Exoria* at Toulouse.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MARCH ON ROME

*The Way is Clear—To the Music of the Royal March—The King Gives the Signal for Departure—The Marionette in Livery—The Faithful Servant.*

HERE finally is the former delinquent, the king-eater, the obstructionist of the Tripolitan War, the apologist for bombs and regicides, the Marat of the Red Week, the paid advocate of war-to-the-finish, the devourer of priests—here finally is the apologist for Bresci and de Bonnot, arrived at the threshold of the Quirinal to become 'the humble servant' of His Majesty!

The succession to the Facta ministry is open.

There could be no question of forming a ministry of the Left.

The Monarchy could not help looking with a favourable eye on the turn the Fascist advance was taking; for always Fascism was approaching nearer to the Quirinal. And more than that it was marking a return to a past which the Monarchy had only renounced through fear of revolution, and through political shrewdness, in the face of revolutionary elements, before the funeral bier of a king struck down by a rebel (Bresci). But we must not see the truth by halves; and to say that the King had a programme is to pay him too much honour, considering the facts.

The Monarchy had its old programme: to go along with the conqueror, always favouring most, on the whole, the one who came nearest to Monarchy and to its reactionary principles.

The conqueror was Fascism and the Monarchy was very happy to accept it.

But if Fascism triumphed it was thanks to the support the bourgeoisie and the anti-Labour parties accorded it.

At this moment all of Italy was in the hands of the Fascists. From the least policeman to the Duke of Aosta, by way of the prefects, the magistrates and the generals, all had become Fascists. The sole reservations made by certain generals concerned only the eventuality of a Fascist attack on the Monarchy. Even in the Facta ministry, Riccio was none other than an informer for Mussolini and his associates.

On his side Mussolini had long ago taken care to give every guarantee of loyalty to the Monarchy.

The general Fascist assembly at Naples dated from that time. It completed by its decisions the final policy. From that moment events were precipitated.

Many people resigned themselves to fate, thinking that Fascism, having no longer a labour revolution to suppress, would calm down by itself. For henceforth Fascism was the only permanent force of disorder remaining in Italy.

Luigi Ambrosini wrote on this subject an article of astonishing lucidity, in the *Stampa* of Turin, November 2, 1922.

He shows clearly the accidental character of the formation of the Mussolini ministry, which might as well have been a Salandra-Mussolini ministry or a

Giolitti-Mussolini ministry, and which was realized only through the impatience of Fascism to arrive at power.

He explains how the second Facta ministry constituted a compromise between the tendencies of the Chamber, which were always more to the Left, and the Right forces, which became each day more menacing to the country. The real solution would have been to dissolve the Chamber and proceed to new elections. But that would have necessitated a reform in the legislative system. Facta remained in the government, like a pawn in the game of massacre who awaited his turn to be killed.

Fascism, excluded from the Facta ministry, put up again a great clamour. Here is what Ambrosini said:

‘The wish [of Fascism] to advance always further into the political scene, until the day when it might become one of the principal actors, was already evident. By now it was more than ever the active party, and it found every method good. The acts of intimidation against the Government and parliament were continual, and were more and more violent.’

He then alludes to the disagreements within the ministry as to the methods to be adopted against Fascism (Taddei and Amendola, it seems, were for energetic action, and that would account for the fate of the latter). And he tells the principal reasons why Facta did not resign sooner. (He was waiting for the formation of the new ministry to be indicated to the King; and also he did not want to lose ground before the Fascist congress at Naples.) Then Ambrosini explains to us how the minister Riccio, who was the

Fascist eye in the ministry, had several times advised the immediate resignation of Facta, with a Right-Fascist solution in view, in collaboration with Salandra.

This took place at the same moment that the Liberals themselves, in congress at Bologna, glorified Salandra and Giolitti. The latter in his speech at Cuneo declared himself in favour of a Liberal-Fascist fusion.

It was then that Facta decided to resign, and the Fascists interposed after their fashion. Their action, which they defined under the singular name of mobilization, became a permanent policy with them, but had nothing in common with the original meaning of the word. And (curiously enough) they have not yet lost the habit of this practice after ten years' exercise of power.

‘Several solutions [Ambrosini continues] presented themselves. They could not exclude from the ministry the collaboration of a *bloc* directed by a Liberal. Certain of them believed in favouring the return of Salandra; others considered as inevitable the advent of Giolitti. The Mussolini ministry, which circumstances ended by imposing, was looked upon in the beginning as one of the most improbable solutions, and as bringing with it no hope. The only certainty was that the Fascists wished to act energetically, and as much as possible to augment the political import of their movements. The degree of their success was dependent on the degree of resistance of their adversaries. We say adversaries, noting notwithstanding that those among them who were not pledged to any political party, and who had

no 'leader,' could, if opportunity offered, become collaborators of Fascism.

'The situation at this moment was at the highest tension, when the Right element intervened to attempt a pacific adjustment. These elements were in contact with the presidency of the Council, and also with the Crown (who had been advised of the gravity of events). The following negotiations were established between the Government and the *Quadrumvirate*.<sup>\*</sup> The honourable De Vecchi left Perugia for Rome, and held an interview with the King. It is not unlikely that the Fascist deputy may then have conveyed to His Majesty the possibility of a ministerial combination between Salandra and the Fascists. The State decree of siege had not been signed and the Stefani Agency anticipated that the idea of resorting to it would be given up. In the course of the same afternoon the King received the honourable De Vecchi a second time, and decided to charge Salandra with the formation of a ministry. The latter went to the Quirinal at half-past five. Immediately the rumour was spread that Salandra and Mussolini would form a new cabinet. But the step taken by the deputy De Vecchi from Turin, known as an adversary of Giolitti, did not have the luck to please Mussolini, who stayed in Milan (where he remained in touch with industrial and political circles), and who immediately made it known that he would not be part of a Salandra ministry.'

Not of a Salandra ministry, but perhaps of a Giolitti ministry. The ministerial character of the

<sup>\*</sup> Michele Bianchi, F. De Bono, Cesare de Vecchi, Italo Balbo.

situation is in any case apparent in this analysis by the editor of the *Stampa*.

We are specifically in the presence of a struggle between combinations. Pressure to obtain the right assortment of portfolios; pressure on the King, caught between the fear of seeing a republic proclaimed, and the threat of the Duke of Aosta to secure dictatorship for himself at the head of the Black Shirts.

Relating to the interview of De Vecchi and Federzoni with the King, on the same day that the latter called Mussolini to Rome, Francesco Ciccotti wrote this:

‘The sense of this discourse was of a nature to produce a profound impression on his mind (the King’s). What chiefly concerned him was the possible participation of the Duke of Aosta in the Fascist ‘March.’ They had already told him that his august cousin had conferred some days before with Mussolini and with Torre from Alessandria, and that he had then gone to Perugia and to Spoleto for the sole purpose of visiting Fascist bands, at the very moment when they were preparing to march on the capital.

But there was a way to get rid of the Duke of Aosta, to isolate him and force him to renounce his leanings toward seditious plottings, by making his possible ally and future generalissimo (that is Mussolini) on that same day Prime Minister to King Victor Emmanuel. The immediate fall of Salandra and the telegraphic summons for Mussolini, always in Milan, were the results of the interview: which took place October 28, at the Quirinal.’\*

\* Book already cited, page 56.

Events rushed to a climax. Read the text of the famous telegram:

‘Honourable Mussolini: His Majesty the King requests you to come immediately to Rome, desiring to charge you with the formation of a ministry.

Salutations.

GENERAL GIARDINI.’

So that was the March on Rome! Mussolini hastened to throw himself at the feet of the King:

‘I ask your Majesty’s pardon [his own words] for presenting myself before him in Black Shirt, returning from a battle which luckily was not sanguinary. I bring to your Majesty the Italy of Vittorio Veneto, regenerated by new victories, and I am the faithful servant of your Majesty.’

Behold the revolution!!

Suppose that Mussolini had had some slight craving to get rid of the King, even by the most ferocious of Republican reactions—a few shots fired by the King’s troops, and the March on Rome would have been converted into a general scramble to safety.

Even then the Duce himself would not have had to flee, for the simple reason that he was in Milan. And really, from Milan to Chiasso, the frontier—it is not far.

The ‘Revolution’ had been the work of De Vecchi’s interview which we have described above.

Have we finally discovered the man whom a great many simple souls have dreamed of and written about? Are we, at least at this moment, in the presence of a Man of Bronze, the inexorable destroyer of political

traditions, the flagellant of old parliamentarism—the man who was to make a new '89 the other way round, and who was going to consign to oblivion that stupid nineteenth century?

Once more let us cite the facts. Let us allow Ambrosini to speak:

‘The Honourable Mussolini in Milan was already beginning to make the list of the new ministry—the very one which he ordered read to us, the journalists, on Monday morning, while they accorded us an audience on the train, between Grosseto and Civitavecchia.’

The list was more Giolittian than Giolitti. It included in fact a follower of Giolitti (Paratore), two Populists (Tangora and Cavazzoni) who formed an effective part of the ministry, and a Social-Democrat, Gino Baldesi, who was torpedoed at the last moment, it seems, by the wish of a single man, who represented precisely the principle of traditional State reaction. I refer to Federzoni, the very one who, while Mussolini was asking for Italian neutrality, in the War, in the name of the Marxian doctrine, was himself asking for intervention on the side of Austria, the beloved of our Holy Mother, the Church!

Therefore one must not be surprised by the lack of consistency in such a paste.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE IMPERIAL ORGY

*State Fascism and Fascism in the Street—The Comparison—  
The Seventeen Impossibilities of Fascism—  
Mussolini is Never Wrong.*

THE banditry of Mussolini now became official.

There are people who pretend that the Fascist crimes appeared only after the March on Rome, or after the affair of Matteotti.

Among these people are several categories: the unthinking; the superficial; the accomplices of the first days, bent on hiding their own faults; those who, entrusted with watching, went to sleep, and woke up too late under the lash of the whip; those whom the imperial sewer vomited up because of a surfeit of blood.

The Fascist crimes that took place following the affair of Matteotti were perpetrated on known personages; it was not the same with those before.

Those victims belonged to the history which later on, in the course of describing the life and death of certain people, will determine their attitude during the different phases of Fascism and anti-Fascism.

We place these victims to-day above all profanation of polemics.

But if the Fascist crimes reached no celebrity from 1920 to 1924, it was just because of the extravagance

and the extent of the massacre, so that it was easier to enumerate those who escaped than those who died, who almost always belonged to the labour movement.

When Fascist crime passed from the collective to the individual, it named successively: Minzoni, Matteotti, Oldani, Pilati, Ferrero, Picinnini, Amendola, Gobetti.

And all these names point to another as executor or accomplice: Mussolini.

They killed in the streets, the hospitals, the public schools, the prisons, the churches, the houses. They obstructed those who make a profession of relieving human misery—nurses, lawyers, doctors, firemen—from going to the relief of victims. They punished fathers for their sons, or entire families for one member whom they wished to reach before he had escaped from prison and from Fascist violences.

They threatened and struck down judges, lawyers and witnesses in the course of certain trials.

During all this time Mussolini, who remained in Milan, cried, 'Strike right and left—spare no one!'

They despoiled and stripped the houses and stores of their rivals. They contributed to the perpetration of all the villainies that sought a roof to hide personal spite.

Arms in hand they got people out of their beds. They killed under the very eyes of mother and children anyone marked to receive the blows of the soldiery in Black Shirts; without stopping at the prestige of a name; not even, as in the case of a certain Pilati, decorated for valour in the War, before one who from the National point of view should have been considered of great personal value.

The most favoured among them escaped with floggings, with affronts and humiliations, which graded from teeth-pulling to the castor-oil purge, including the shaving off of the beard. But there were also others who were mutilated, blinded, thrown out of the window, or yet immersed in water up to the neck. There were those whom they put naked into the most frequented streets of the city and exhibited to the public. They reserved that fate usually for serious, cultivated people, who had held public offices. Many became insane after undergoing such outrages and humiliations.

Mussolini continued to fling his cry, 'strike everywhere, spare no one!' In that way he arrived at Rome.

But affairs did not go so well with those who had had him summoned.

Nitti had wished to palliate the revolutionary danger of 1919 by opening the safety valves of the elections, foreseeing that in that way the proletariat would split up, and float the Social-Democrat party in the governmental squadron.

Giolitti, on the other hand, had recourse to Fascism, while seeking the same ends as Nitti.

The Socialists had gained a great victory, that is, at the polls. It was necessary to beat down their pride by giving them a good flogging. Then perhaps they would decide to 'collaborate.'

He then addressed himself to Mussolini to accomplish this end.

If it had been really a question of subduing a revolution, as certain people maintained, then Giolitti, or anyone else in his place, would not have hesitated to proclaim a state of siege.

But a state of siege did not answer the purpose they wished to accomplish. It would, moreover, have localized responsibilities too much, and have irritated the Liberals and the Democrats. The Fascist bands, on the contrary, could compromise no one in particular, and, in not excluding the Republican principle, they obtained thus the favour of Freemasonry and of some Left-wing sympathies.

That permitted Mussolini to gather up all the different elements.

And all of them committed the imprudence of introducing the enemy into their midst with good will. In showing him their cards they exposed all their trumps.

Mussolini, already a ferocious enemy of the Republicans in the old days, knew their hatred for the Socialists. A former Marxian theorist, he drew from his knowledge of class struggle and middle-class oscillation the necessary data for his operations.

In fact, it would have been ridiculous to talk of a state of siege after 1920, since in that year the movement of occupation of the factories was liquidated. But supposing a state of siege, they would have been faced with a legal reaction, which could have been measured, regulated and checked by the government, with the possibility of absolute control on its part. The Fascist bands, on the other hand, were becoming stronger than those who unleashed them.

Such was the will of the plutocracy. It made in fact, this extremely simple argument—

Giolitti would like to weaken the proletariat and Socialism. Let us help him! He wants to weaken them in order then to usurp the power

with their aid and at their expense: let us still help him, but to excess, toward the total destruction of every principle on which Giolitti and a Democratic government could rely to-morrow.

Mussolini was the scarecrow they chose for their enterprise.

His immorality, his personal hatreds due to personal treacheries, his aptitude for crime, were so many references to recommend him to his employers.

What they did not want to pay to restore the finances of the State, they paid ten-fold to have the people massacred, and to deprive them of all liberty.

This fantastic course in the interest of tyranny could have no outcome. It was the madness of reaction, headed for the abyss, reduced as it was to exasperation within itself, having in the enemy camp no further vital or specific force to massacre—not even among those who slightly differed from it.

What is the balance sheet of ten years of Fascism?

State banditry has come to superimpose itself on street banditry.

A banditry applied to the courts, to the administration, to the exchanges, to foreign policy, to the whole social machinery, to moral and political life!

A return to legality, to normal life—that was an impossible thing for Mussolini. That is why Fascism is not vital.

If it could have been vital, he would have made it so, in the course of ten years of absolute power, without counter-weight, spread over the whole life of the nation, and master of all the armed forces.

He could not conceive it; and even if he had conceived it he could not have realized it.

To that end first he would have had to be able to make of Fascism a moral unity, possessing a veritable personality, and then have become a dictator in the historic sense of the word.

But once again that was impossible. Impossible a moral unity among people coming from the most diverse parties, poisoned by their former political passions (supposing that they ever really had any), and who anyway could not find new ones; among people who hated each other, not in the way comrades of the same party can hate (and then often find their disagreements dissolved in great moments, in some communion of ideas); but with a hatred resulting from a mutual lack of esteem more or less poorly disguised, conscious of an absence of a unifying ideal, exasperated by a common life in the thick of the *fascies*. From that came disunion in hours of danger, just when ties should have been most strengthened in order to face it. Look at the general scramble following the Matteotti affair, where each one tried to save himself as best he could, by fair or foul means. Look at the laws exacting the death penalty, imposed not against those who, not being Fascists, could be killed at every hour of day or night in any event, by superior orders assuring reward from the State; but on every evidence, to remind the Fascists themselves, those sent by 'divine Providence,' that, with the slightest lapse of solidarity of sentiment, at least they had better show a wholesome fear to make them conjugate the verb 'obey' in the first person.

Impossible a real dictatorship! For real dictator-

ship requires the command of one, and the obedience of everyone else. A real dictatorship cannot exist under the sign of 'What do we care.' What is more, in Italy these dictators who had no respect for one another, and none of them for the great dictator, numbered several hundred. In each village, in each hamlet, in each province, the envoys of God grew and prospered like mushrooms. They existed in perpetual rivalry; they had their finances, their police, their own troops, which they used toward their rather shady commercial ends. And they could inscribe on their banners this device: 'God gave it to us; misfortune to the one who touches it.'

There were no more strikes. But each little tyranny and dependent tyranny wanted its court, its ceremonial, its apotheosis. It wanted to see the *balillas*\* march before it at the local fêtes, which it ordered to celebrate the notable events of local revolutionary history. And all who preferred to go on working in these sacred days, were treated like vile Bolsheviks, enemies of the nation and of the human race, opposed to the wish of the clearly expressed will of the creator of the universe.

And Mussolini believed himself a great dictator!!

After ten years of supreme power, Fascism is further than ever from lawful methods.

There took place in France after 1870 two successive revolutions. One of them upset an Imperial

\* Fascist childishness: Balilla is the name of the young man who threw the first stone in the uprising of the Genoese against the Austrians in 1746. He was a popular Genoese hero. (Translator's note.)

government; the other, the Commune, opposed a provisory government. After a bloody struggle between these two forces, both armed with guns and cannon, the Commune was vanquished by the reaction. But ten years after, the reaction had done its utmost to have its massacres forgotten, and had for some time gone back to law and order.

In 1848 in Italy a revolution broke out in pontifical circles, which did away with the Pope and proclaimed a republic. A counter revolution brought back the Pope and a frightful reaction followed. But ten years after, life became normal again.

We can also cite the restoration of the Bourbons at Naples, the return of the Austrians to Milan in 1848, the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon in France, the restoration in Hungary (events marked by the fall of thrones and by radical transformations of economic systems). Ten years after these diverse revolutions, ten years after these profound social upheavals, life had for some time resumed its normal course, and governments did their best to bring that about.

Only in Italy, where there had been no subversion, either political or economic; where it was only a so-called question of punishing the workmen for strikes; where they proclaimed that henceforth the citizens, even the new-born, must conform to the Fascist etiquette, and cry 'alala';\* where they saw to it that everything (parliament, labour unions, press, universities, co-operatives, insurance agencies, townships, provinces, parties) could exist only to exalt and sanction the government of which they had to be an

\* Rallying cry invented by d'Annunzio and taken up by the Fascists. (Translator's note.)



inherent part; where they affirmed that all the opposing forces should be crushed and their leaders consigned to opprobrium;—in Italy, and in Italy alone, after ten years of terror, not only is liberty not yet mentioned, nor amnesty, nor commutation of sentence; but even to those remaining faithful to the Government and its party, liberty is not conceded—a liberty denied to opponents and enemies for the purpose of destroying them!\*

Even after so many years of despotism, they still have recourse to measures of exception within exception: the death penalty, the prescribed residence, the special supervision, the air police, emigration considered an offence, the special police of Fascists against Fascists, and of each against all, domestic

\* The recent 'decree of amnesty' does not contradict this statement; for an amnesty which is not accompanied by a return to conditions of liberty sustained over a given period, can only be an expedient of despotism.

Amnesty? Not one of the principal militants imprisoned for having fought against Fascism has been freed. The special Tribunal rarely inflicted terms of less than ten years of confinement, and the amnesty annuls only the terms that do not pass five years, while it reduces to three years those from five to ten years, and to five years those over ten years, but on condition that the term still to be accomplished is not less than seven years.

Amnesty? In Article 4 of the decree one reads: 'There are excluded from the benefits of the decree all defaulters who do not constitute themselves prisoners in the four months following the promulgation of the decree.' Have you ever heard of an amnesty which transforms into convicts the exiles returning to their country? And they are counted by thousands.

*Il Popolo d'Italia* of November 8, 1932, gives the number of prisoners who will be liberated by this amnesty: 639 political prisoners (evidently those who were eligible for freedom, because they had already served some years of prison) and from 15,000-20,000 civil offenders. In a country where terror has reigned for ten years, such a mystification can only be for the purpose of impressing foreigners, for whom the Fascist gazettes have proclaimed that even General Capello, Zaniboni and Gino Luccetti would be liberated—which is an impudent lie.

passports for all citizens, and many other measures besides!

To whom does Italy belong now?

To the Fascists certainly!

For the outside world, always amazed and waiting for some fresh novelty from the mountebank Mussolini, they invariably serve up stories that have never existed except on paper—for example, the 'labour chart,' the 'labour magistrates,' the corporative-parliament.'

But, if you look more closely, you will be obliged to conclude that there is just a tiny little nothing-at-all which imposes impotence and death on this collaborative enterprise: it is the fact that it has for its basis coercion, solely coercion.

Imposed collaboration, prescribed residence; murderers, official and non-official, operating for the State; an unremovable Government, because every military force upholding it is at the disposition of the chief of State—these are the factors that give us an idea of the dictatorship against the enemies of Fascism; even though these factors do not show the harmony that ought normally to exist between a great dictator and his party.

It is evident that this so-called collaboration, even in the degree possible under the Fascist rod, can live no longer than the bayonets which uphold the regime. Then what meaning has this 'labour chart,' 'labour magistrates,' 'labour votes,'—all this pretence of defence of labour—when the entire work of this sinister jumping-jack has only tended toward the continual destruction and repression of labour?

The communal life of convicts condemned to prison labour under the watch of guards—can that be called 'collaboration'?

To reach a relative normality, or at least to attempt it, the Fascists would have had to fuse in government with the other parties who smoothed the way for them after the March on Rome. And the other parties asked for nothing better.

It is told that Briand said to the Italian dictator, at the time of their meeting in Locarno, that no one could cross the Rubicon again. And Briand was right: who indeed could cross such deep rivers of blood? The allied parties would have ended by putting Fascism into the Parliamentary storehouse; and in that way the Duce, founder of the militia, would have been laid aside, like a machine of which one has demanded the maximum usage in a brief time.

He might, having surmounted the dangerous period of the seizure of power, have made a distinguished exit, and found a life of ease and repose, like some dozens of satraps who have taken refuge in the Fascist ferment. But what would have become of all the others, that band of mercenaries, of good-for-nothings, suddenly prominent, thanks to the power of their leader, and who knew they would always be pointed out for their innumerable crimes?

How could all these people be saved?

For that reason among others, the impossibility of finding a way which permitted a return to normal life, or even to a stabilized reaction!

Let me enumerate the impossibilities undermining the existence of Fascism:

1. As we have just said, Fascism finds it impossible to return to a normal life.

2. Mussolini is not a real Cæsar.

3. There can be no collaboration with the proletariat, freely consented to.

4. Nor any spiritual union among the Fascists themselves.

5. It is absolutely impossible for Fascism to find a personal programme, an idea which might be a reason for living, for fighting off death.

6. In case of retreat the Fascists cannot make a compact and unified retreat.

7. It is impossible for Fascism to make the world go backwards, because it is not enough to change the course of certain elements (the press, industry, schools, etc.); but it would be necessary to annihilate every vital force of civilization.

8. Fascism cannot stop the rhythm of the social life; for that can only be stopped in its superficial aspects, in its appearances, thus creating voids payable only in revolutions greater in violence than are these voids in extent.

9. Mussolini and the Fascists cannot go forward: first because it is contrary to their role, and then because they cannot rid themselves of the reactionary forces at the base of their power; nor can they find forces to the Left to uphold them.

10. They cannot balance the State Budget to-day by means of economies, looted as it is by a band of hungry sharks, and dissipated by the necessity of keeping up the appearance of empire.

11. They cannot play the politics of great public works and grandiose construction, such as have

characterized imperialist efforts in every country of history. For it is certain that Fascist Italy has not known how to create anything in abundance except debts.

12. Fascism cannot give to Italy the halo of co-operating in an international progressive policy of pacifism; nor can they crown themselves any better with the laurels of military imperialism, or economic imperialism, or even imperialism by way of emigration.

13. Fascism cannot change fundamentally the soul of the Italian people, who by every evidence are hostile to the multiple faces of the Fascist hydra.

14. It is impossible for Fascism to get rid of Papal support, even though it costs, as it has up to the present, nearly two thousand millions. Even if it should cost infinitely more.

15. It is impossible for Fascism, in spite of payments in silver and in 'titles' (Fascist titles, of course) to realize a lasting conciliation with the she-wolf, the Roman Vatican, 'which is always hungrier after a meal than before.'

16. Impossible to get rid of the Monarchy.

17. Impossible for Fascism to serve the King with abnegation involving a sacrifice of power; as Bismarck once did, and Primo de Rivera more recently in Spain.

In a word, it is a *bundle of faggots* bristling with impossibilities, cemented in blood and shame, marked by international evasions, and consecrated by the misery of a whole people.

One can imagine the demoralizing effect of such events on the soul of a people who (in spite of diverse

elements) are the freest in spirit, the most thirsty for originality and initiative. And who draw from their own natures, in keeping with their very individual temperament, that quite special versatility to be found in music, in song, in painting, in all the arts in fact—with the result that life is beautiful to them even in poverty and grief; and that they derive from living very deep imprints of joy and love.

The problem then comes down to this: are the Italian people going to die or is Fascism?

But can a people die?

In truth here is the agonizing question:

‘How can the Italian people tear from their bodies this terrifying shirt of Nessus?’

In Spain the departure of Primo de Rivera did not immediately drag Alfonso XIII along with it.

But that was because both of them were reactionaries in the old style, and leaned on long-established historic forces, and on those forces alone. They could do this, thanks to a mentality, a tradition, an education in keeping with their sorry functions.\*

Fascism is entirely different from everything else; one could even say below everything else.

It contaminates everything and copies everything, from the Pope to Stalin.

It betrays everything and everybody, although in

\* Read what *Il Popolo d'Italia* published after the March on Rome, when it feared that the elections in the municipality of Milan, December 1922, would be a defeat for Fascism: ‘By means of our agents we shall incite the appetite and greed of the Red rabble against those who desert the ballot box and against their property’ (December 9, 1922). Can you imagine a Primo de Rivera, a Bismarck, even a Daudet or a Hitler using such expedients, such acts of intimidation against the bourgeoisie, to get out of a bad scrape in the course of an electoral campaign?

reality it deceives no one. Its repeated treacheries derive always from a total lack of faith in any kind of ideal, liberal or authoritative, out of future or past, toward which people must strive, continually and passionately, with all their strength.

The veritable tragedy is there. And Mussolini knows very well that he represents the façade which hides this nothingness.

Everyone knows it, whether it be the Pope, or Stalin or Victor Emmanuel III—or the industrialists, the bankers or the military leaders. Even the Fascists who have wallowed in the same corruption with him—they know it well. Everyone knows it.

Fascism has wished, and I insist particularly on this point, to deny all ideas, and at the same time to make use of them all, in order to borrow from each one what it pleases, free to reject them the next day.

But it has not been able to abolish any of the more recent ideas, and if it makes use of the old, it is only to extract what is mean and dreary, in order to try and fabricate a new personality. Yet it has only succeeded in creating a monster, the result of an amalgamation of waste matter from every party.

I wish to emphasize here a truth which is more than a simple statement of faith in one's own philosophy. I want to say that every ideal carries within itself, in the field of relativity, a parcel of truths condensed by centuries of social experience—truths which determine the different ways of conceiving existence, and preferences which men show in their social relations. This collection of truths responds to the fashion of feeling that dominates such and such a period, and is

determined by the interests and passions themselves determining the interests of different castes, classes, and submerged classes. All these diverse and often opposed ideas may be good or bad, but all of them have a base, a logic, a balance, a morale of their own.

Examine the political conceptions which go side by side in our society—imperialism, pacifism, the republic, the democracy, liberalism, parliamentarism, socialism, communism, anarchism. All these systems may be beautiful or ugly, advanced or outworn, or Utopian, according to one's point of view. But each one proceeds from a parent idea to which it belongs; from an idea which can be examined, compared, dissected; which has a past history, a tradition, which admits of an interpretation of life, and which is thus susceptible of provoking passion and faith. These ideas can only result in a selection of men from different parties, each one having a powerful moral force of attraction.

Fascism cannot do this.

It is an impossible monster; an incongruous beast.

Fascism might be compared with a skyscraper whose foundations are bayonets.

Take a piece of charcoal, close your eyes, and make a random, shapeless daub, which could resemble nothing, not even a futurist painting, and you will get an exact image of the Fascist edifice.

But ideas without foundation crumble in the end exactly like buildings . . . even if, in the language of the 'Balilla,' the first article of their Ten Commandments, before which we bow with the greatest respect, pretends to the contrary. Here it is:



Article I: *Mussolini is never wrong.*

So then he was not 'wrong' when he wrote this:\*

*'I believe that the act of a brave bomb-thrower is more useful for the purposes of humanity than all the orders of the day and all the chattering that two hundred carcasses of red cardinals can make in Rome, who arrogate to themselves the right and the monopoly to rescue this poor, bewildered and suffering humanity.'*

\*

That is what Lucetti, Zamboni, Michele Schirru, Domenico Bovone, Angelo Sbardellotto and many others have thought.

The history ready to be written stops here. But the other history continues, unless it may have only just begun.

\* *Il Popolo d'Italia*, No. 249, September 8, 1918.

## EPILOGUE

### HITLER: MUSSOLINI'S DISCIPLE\*

THE French edition of this book was published in 1932 by Rieder in Paris (*Mussolini en Chemise*), and was followed immediately by a Dutch edition, *Mussolini In Zijn Hemd*. In the meanwhile we have had to register a new piece of good fortune for Italian Fascism, and a new misfortune for the cause of liberty: the triumph of the Nazis in Germany.

As a result a series of questions has presented itself to all thinking persons apropos of these significant events: the Italian and German seizures of power by dictators. These are the questions:

What is Fascism?

What is Hitlerism?

What, if any, relation exists between the two?

What influence does the one exert over the other?

What interaction of cause and effect?

In which do we find the maximum of crime?

In which the maximum scorn and disfigurement of liberty? In Italy or in Germany?

Of course these questions are also asked by the followers of the two terrorist regimes, and there are plenty who pretend that the worst qualities are to be found in the other camp.

In Germany, for instance, General Ludendorff thought it wise to sound an alarm against excessive

\* Written in the summer of 1934.

sympathy for Italy, 'always faithless and Machiavel-  
lian,' according to his expression. On the other hand,  
we have heard several voices from Italy, though none  
quite so authoritative, clamouring that no Fascism  
was the pure and genuine article without the Roman  
trade-mark.

After all, by now, it is almost a commonplace that  
the nationalistic fury of any one country is as essential  
to that of another as are their mutual rivalries.

The very different names, 'low Tyrol' and 'high  
Adige,' given respectively in Germany and Italy to  
that part of the Austrian Tyrol (doubtless of German  
origin) which Italy annexed after the Great War, and  
strives now to 'Romanize' by Colonial methods, only  
serve to remind both sides of the Alps that their  
accounts are still unsettled.

Something similar, though in the reverse sense, is  
taking place in the camps of the victims of Mussolini  
and Hitler.

The victims of Italian Fascism will rather easily  
believe that German Fascism was and is less abomin-  
able than its Italian counterpart; while the victims of  
German Fascism claim for their oppressor the world  
championship of infamy, and never fail to find good  
and sufficient arguments to persuade themselves that  
beside Hitler Mussolini is a cooing dove.

The German Catholics, injured and offended by  
Hitler's action against their 'Popular party,' will  
remember, for what comfort they may get out of it,  
that Mussolini can boast of having recognized the  
Vatican. By the same token the German Jews will  
cheerfully forget this privilege, granted by Mussolini  
to the religion that has always persecuted them, in

view of the fact that Italian Jews were not persecuted as such by the Black Shirts. Likewise the Italian Freemasons could find in Hitler's preference for baiting the Jew before the Mason (who at one time was Mussolini's pet target), an argument to attenuate the monstrous guilt of Hitlerism; although by this time Hitler seems to be fairly well started in his deferred persecution of Freemasonry.

Along this path we should only become lost in a labyrinth of nonsense and contradiction, debasing human reason and human dignity, which would play into the bloody hands of the two tyrannies. Indeed, were we to follow this path, every tyrant and every tyranny would find some argument for justification and acquittal.

We must recognize, none the less, that the sentimental and moral causes inducing the victims of any one nation to find always greater charges against the oppressors of their own country than against foreign despots, are only human; and may in some ways contribute to foment the spirit of rebellion. If at the outbreak of the Great War each and every people had probed into the responsibilities of their governments, none would have fallen into the abyss of ignorance, unreason and blind fanaticism into which they all fell. Yet they could have done this only on one condition: that their accusations against the home government were not to be transformed into praises for other countries, nor considered other than the outcome of their understanding of the complex war guilt shared alike by all imperialism and militarism.

Thus it is in the appraisal of the two major Fascist centres of Europe. That the victims of each country

should feel more keenly the smart and insult of their own dictatorship than of the other's, having seen its action closely, and felt it upon their own persons, is no more than natural. And in each case it becomes a possible element to kindle and keep burning the fires of revolution. And yet no enemy of Italian Fascism should really fall into the snare of lauding Hitler, in the delusion that he thus strikes harder at Mussolini. Nor vice versa, should a victim of Nazism make the blunder of praising Mussolini in order to blacken Hitler.

Tyrants—despite national centres wherein they entrench themselves and their attendant rivalries—sustain and uphold each other so well that it would be, to say the least, childish for their victims to seek degrees of crime and guilt among them, to the advantage of one despot over another.

But let us get down to fundamentals.

Are there any traits of resemblance between Fascism and Nazism?

I think so, to the point of recognizing them as twins, or better still, as Siamese twins. Mussolini himself recognizes the likeness. It is known, however, that he did not grant this recognition to the deeds and time of Primo de Rivera in Spain. In fact, shortly after the famous incident when Alfonso XIII introduced his prime minister as 'my Mussolini,' the latter wrote in indirect denial that 'Fascism was not an article of exportation.' But to-day he no longer makes this restriction. To-day, in the triumph of Hitler, Mussolini and his henchmen see a most happy symp-

tom of the international growth of Fascism in the States themselves and in the relations between States and groups of States. This attitude shows that Mussolini has fully understood the difference between De Riverism and Hitlerism. The consanguinity of Fascism and Nazism emerges at these points:

I. The illegal aspects of the reaction.

II. The pretence in both cases that they were carrying on a revolution. This pretence gained belief by the very fact of the extra-legality of the reaction, and by their common intention to undo in this way all the evolutionary products of the French Revolution. It also gained belief through the added pretence of ushering in a new historical system; yet whose real purpose was to graft the worst of the snarlingly nationalistic and swashbuckling socialism of later years on the trunk of a renascent medievalism.

III. The ferments of foreign politics which in both countries were mingled with the perturbation of internal politics.

IV. Their *totalitarianism*, i.e., the will of the two Fascisms to weld in the blast furnace of dictatorship the entire nation and all classes into a single party.

We shall analyse these points successively.

First, the reactionary illegalism. This is the major characteristic of both Fascisms. This is what differentiates them from the systems of classical reaction in the manner of Bismarck and Crispi, and the systems built by *coup d'états* from the top, in the manner of Louis Napoleon and De Rivera.

The method of Bismarck, etc., is to put a stop to the march of progress by employing exceptional

means, but always with a pretence at legality, and always making use of hierarchic contingents chosen from the traditional institutions of so-called law and order—the church, the army, and the judiciary. If necessary exceptional laws could be resorted to, but these must be strictly constitutional. In other words, theirs is a circumstantial illegalism, limited to a short period, such as would give way, once the crisis is over, to regular and ordinary means. The famous ‘normality’ is always restored with wide amnesties meant to cast a veil of forgetfulness over the very victory of reaction. If we may be allowed the simile, these were cases which called for drastic but temporary clinical cures. Whereas Fascism means to be a violent surgical process intended to change anatomically and intricately the entire social structure. In the *coup d'états* of Louis Napoleon and De Rivera, making due concessions for the differences of time, place and men, we always notice the characteristics of an *official reaction* from above through the regular forces of the traditional, social and political order.

To go on to the next point, *pretence of revolution*: Fascism and Hitlerism are identified in this respect: they use the language both of reaction and of revolution, pretending to save their institutions of order through disorder and banditry. And that with no care for appearances. On the contrary, with an ostentatious illegalism, elevated moreover to the sanctity of a principle. They both make use of the parties and institutions of traditional order as far as these serve them; but they trust their fortunes especially to their armed squads. Furthermore, while the Bismarcks, the Crispis, the De Riveras were a thousand leagues

away from pretending to be revolutionists—they would have considered the term defamatory—Mussolini and Hitler boast of it and pride themselves on their so-called revolutions. Mussolini, speaking before the Italian Senate on German Nazism apropos of the already forgotten Four-Power Pact, assured his senators that what had just taken place in Germany was a vast and profound 'social' revolution! Yet we must always insist that in neither country did any revolution take place, unless words have entirely lost their meaning (to the point of considering 'revolutionary' the assassination of Abraham Lincoln!).

Nor did any such thing occur in either country like a reactionary restoration considered as a legal outbreak against presumed extremist excesses. What happened in both cases was an outburst of banditry with a deceptive revolutionary colour—acts of extreme violence committed by mercenary bands of marauders who shrank from no methods, however inhuman, and were sheltered from all responsibility. And what is more—with the future of their families insured by these entrepreneurs of 'revolutions,' raised to the dictatorship of the State.

Let us speak now of the arguments relative to *foreign politics*. This indeed was an indispensable ingredient of the social precipitate hastening Fascism in Italy and Germany. And soon enough the effect in one country becomes the motivating cause of similar effects in other countries. In Europe, reduced to a crazy-quilt of nationalistic patches, in a Balkanized Europe, the triumph over two of the great central nations by two such pyromaniacs clad in their varicoloured shirts, can only become the cause of a general



septicæmia—in the bellicose, revengeful sense of the word. In the ferments of foreign politics there exist undoubtedly some differences between Italy and Germany, but these relate to exasperations created by Mussolini and Hitler, who yet both consider war as a 'social prophylaxis'—the Duce's own words to be found somewhere in the Fascist encyclopædia now being published in Italy at the expense of the State.

In Italy, a unit nation of the victorious Allies, the parties which called themselves patriot were divided after the War into two camps—patriots who wanted to moderate the spirit of conquest, and the die-hard annexationists. There arose the usual 'victory to the hilt' cliques who advocated a reactionary policy at home. That was in order to give to plutocratic minorities, then falsely enriched, a free hand to release politics and the press from an irksome democratic control—in fine, to unload upon the common people the great burden of the post-War period as well as that of future politics, aiming with every energy toward a new and vaster war.

To examine the German situation under these aspects would be a long task and would lead us far afield. In synthesis, as is known to all, the politics of the victorious nations besides being in themselves unjust to Germany, served to cover everything German with the crimes and misdemeanours of the German plutocrats and Kaiserists; who had remained at the helm of the Reich, despite the thin outer shell of the Republic.

In the catastrophe of the post-War period, a protracted symptom of which was the enormous swindle of inflation, the German people saw guilt nowhere

except in France—the idol hated by the Fatherland. They had never learned to love a Republic which had given them nothing but misery and famine, nor could they appreciate a peace which crushed and exasperated their Chauvinistic aspirations. In this wise they were worked upon by, and doomed to become the playthings of, the first adventurer who thundered about the future greatness of the humiliated Fatherland, and promised to revamp all the fanatical boastings of Prussian militarism.

It is superfluous to say that even from the point of view of national interest the two humbugs of extreme nationalism, Mussolini and Hitler, will have solved nothing in favour of their respective countries. They only contribute enormously to weaken the peace-loving forces of other countries, and to paralyse every effort to obtain concessions and modifications of the Treaties—which time would surely have imposed. Indeed it must be borne in mind that on the war terrain there will have to be something more than the burning and sacking of labour halls and the pogroms of Jews and Freemasons. . . .

Here we must put a question which everyone may answer by assuming the viewpoint of either an Italian or German patriot: Has the element of 'foreign politics' been more of a burden in the development of the Italian situation or in that of Germany? In other words, did the Versailles Treaty and the subordinate Treaties offend more against Italian or German interests? Accepting the military-Nationalist point of view, that is, excluding as do the two Fascisms a pacific solution, a time solution, of the problems created or left unsolved by the Versailles Treaty—

which of the two national exasperations, Italian or Teuton, can find the better interpretation in their own interests?

The problem is extremely translucent.

Mussolini and Hitler have sometimes followed different tactics, but even so they have pursued the same end—*totalitarianism*—the wiping out from political life of every party including those of the bourgeoisie, save their own, the Fascists. The few tactical differences arise solely out of the exigencies of the different situations in the two countries. Hitler's main problem was to destroy the Weimar constitution—that pitiful measure of democracy inherent in the hollow shell of the Republic. Italian Fascism, on the contrary, began with vague promises of a vague republic, as this book demonstrates. It is therefore quite evident that Mussolini had later to eliminate from his original armed hordes and their actions certain democratic and bourgeois elements. On the other hand Hitler's immediate task was to attack them in bulk, all united against him, he who had no republic to promise them, but the larva of one to destroy.

Therefore the first phase of Italian Fascist warfare with its unprecedented massacres attacked mostly the working classes, which were themselves engaged in struggles and rivalries (also of an electoral kind) with the parties of bourgeois democracy and with the Catholic Democrats, having never entirely co-operated with the latter, even during the War period. This was not the case in Germany with Hitler, who

found the forces of bourgeois democracy almost entirely arrayed on the side of the Republican government, with the unanimous support of the Socialists, and a majority of the labour unions ardently siding with the latter. And in that is the reason why at the beginning Mussolini's execrable squad warfare did not raise such a clamour of indignation in the world. It was not because he did not persecute the Jews, who in Italy are not regarded as a distinct element in the national life, but because prior to the March on Rome he had the following needs:

1. To defeat separately the Labour and Socialist parties, who operated outside of the liberal postures of the Monarchy and the Democratic bourgeois parties.

2. To carry his fight first to the agricultural centres, unreached by public opinion, where the crimes of the Fascist squads would be confined to provincial newspapers and gossips.

3. To avoid by this precedence a direct clash with Democratic and Liberal bourgeois parties.

Did Mussolini respect the liberty of the Jews? Yes, but in the same manner that he respected the liberty of Mohammedans, who do not exist in Italy. It cannot be too often emphasized that although for many centuries the Jews had to keep far away from the countries of Popes, Jesuits, Bourbons, and Spanish regimes, yet the few Israelites who struck roots in Italy in ancient times during intervals of relative freedom and revolutionary periods, became acclimated. So much so, that at a later time it was possible for them to have several State Ministers in a country where Catholicism was a State religion—such

as Baron Sonnino, for Foreign Affairs, and L. Luzzatti for Public Education. That they were Jews nobody minded more than the colour of their hair or the style of their whiskers.

But totality is totality. Hitler, who from the start treated the German Jews just as Mussolini had treated the Italian Radical peasants—that is, ruthlessly, mercilessly and without legal responsibility—dealt later with his ex-allies, the Catholics and Nationalists, much in the same fashion.

His orders were: 'Only one shirt!' The strait jacket! This was in exact counterpoint to what Mussolini pronounced against all the parties and fractions of parties which in the early days of Fascism, before and for some time after he had seized the power, had shown themselves more or less sympathetic or tolerant toward the Black Shirts. It was the order that Mussolini gave against the Italian Freemasons, who after the murder of Matteotti reacted in disgust, and struck back by passing over to the Constitutional and Parliamentary opposition; thereby revealing themselves as disloyal friends, aspiring to a share of the power. This ambition Fascism could only interpret as a blow aimed at its dictatorship.

The general conditions alone of the fight for power have somewhat changed the aspect of the two Fascisms. One, the German, proceeded outward from the centre, Berlin. The other, the Italian, inward from the periphery, overrunning countryside and provinces, skirting the major cities, and up to the March on Rome leaving out of its wake Rome and Milan—the political and business centres of Italy. In this way Mussolini avoided an untimely encounter

with Democratic bourgeois forces. Whereas his double, Hitler, at the outset, found his road to dictatorship crossed and blocked by the very forces against whose principles he had raised his standard.

The Jews in Germany, almost all of them, had the merit of militating in the vanguards of democracy and the extreme Left, and thus proved an easy prey to the Nazi marauders, who found in their opposition a ready excuse for hoisting the bloody flag of pogroms, in order to rid themselves of Democratic and Radical elements which had upheld the Republic. And by the same stroke they eliminated Jewish competition from the business affairs of their 'Aryan' supporters. It would be entirely naïve to put any other construction on Hitler's drive against the Jews. His 'race purity' is nothing but a thin and miserable camouflage of his desire to destroy the Jew, as a democrat opposed to his absolutism, and as a business competitor of his followers. All of which stands to prove the gross error of believing that Italian Fascism was sustained by a greater respect for the principles of liberty, even though confined to religious belief, or by a keener political clairvoyance, in not raising the Jewish question.

The reader should now begin to see that Hitler learned from Mussolini all of his system of repression. It is clear that he imitates his master to the letter and follows in his footsteps slavishly. He reproduces through *faits accomplis* the same hoodlums—the militiamen of Mussolini—to massacre dissenters, after systematizing the so-called triumph of what he pleases to call a revolution. He adopts the forms of the erstwhile Labour movement, too vast and widespread and

too deeply rooted to be pulled up at once by mere decree, in order to turn it into an obsequious instrument of his dictatorship. This has been accomplished only in appearances, not more than in appearances; for those who have caused the class-struggle have had to come to the end of their patience in their struggle for liberty.

All that Hitler knows he has learned from Italian Fascism—to create by violence a party that could say: ‘The State, it is I. I am the class, I am the labour union, I am the press and the school, I am the army; and I declare a war to extermination by every means, good and evil, against any and all who, through culture, art, speech or pen, theatre, cinema, religion, sport, fashion, or even silence, prayer for death and hope of the hereafter, do not submit to and exalt the dread: “I am the dictatorship!”’

It may be objected that we have raised only a moral issue. And for those whose morals are primarily utilitarian, our probing of the causes that withheld Italian Fascism from an onslaught on the Jews will seem futile and without importance. The mere fact that this persecution did not take place in Italy will suffice for these pragmatists to make a difference between the two Fascisms. This argument, if cogent, does not swerve us from our line of reasoning. Our aim and our passion is to defend liberty, *per se*, because it is liberty, and not because it serves the ends of this or that particular race, creed, class or individual. Liberty is either liberty or is nothing. I shall, therefore, hold to our major premise and to our argument that Fascism cannot be overcome and destroyed in one country by extenuating its crimes in another.

Indeed we shall even add that the concessions so glibly made to Italian Fascism because it is not anti-Semitic, do not lessen its responsibility in having inspired, abetted and approved the Hitler policies against the Jews. Some day we shall know what silent and hidden help Italian Fascism gave to the Nazis of Germany, not the least of which was of a financial kind. Already we know that in Germany the most popular man, next to Hitler, is Mussolini; and in Italy, next to Mussolini, the greatest hero of modern times is Hitler.

The oscillations of foreign politics, always unstable, do not change the base of this truth.

What we know is that during the Berlin massacres the riff-raff of Rome was shouting huzzas to the two inseparable leaders. What is absolutely incontrovertible is that no voice of protest against the Nazi outrages is allowed to be raised in Italy. That the Italian press is full of praise for the German dictator. And that the Italian press alone, in the grip of Mussolini's fist, does not publish a single news item about the numerous manifestations of solidarity from all the races and nations of the earth towards the enchained German people.



Following the rule adopted in this book we turn from argument to document.

Let us open the magazine *Gerarchia*, which carries as sub-title, 'A Political Review edited by Benito Mussolini.' In its number of April 1933, when Hitler was already in power, we find a most interesting article corroborating our point of view. A German writer, Warner von der Schulenberg, in an article



entitled 'The German Revolution,' writes a fulsome eulogy of German events and developments. We quote the most salient passages:

'The German revolution is developing with unheard-of speed; one event overtops the other, and the framework of the State is to-day entirely modified.'

Having praised the law suppressing the autonomy of the various States of the Reich, which henceforth are to be ruled by governors appointed by the President, our author passes along to the glorification of the . . . pedagogic methods of the new rule to alter and modify the very notions and opinions of the people:

'Never in the world [he adds with admirable sincerity], not even in Russia, were the masses worked on with so much alacrity and so much violence.'

The writer cannot avoid touching on the Jewish question, but does so with the skill of one who understands full well the Italian psychology and its reactions in such matters:

'How complex the Jewish question is, is not an easy thing to make clear to Italians.'

Thereupon he expands into all sorts of justifications of the anti-Semitic persecution, in a way which he thinks is less hostile to the mind of a nation whose age-old attitude toward the Jews could not tolerate a less tactful language:

'Whole populations, Oriental in origin, and Israelite in religion, have lately crossed the

boundaries of Germany carrying into our German life the seeds and ferments of other conditions of material and spiritual life, native to Oriental Europe, and in open and strident antagonism to the customs, the traditions, the standard and habits of thought and action proper to the German civilization, and which acted upon it as elements of disintegration, corruption and dissolution. This Judaism which has no roots in Germany seems to have strong connecting liens with Communism.'

Then follows a general denial of the reported atrocities against the Jews:

'All the so-called horrors wreaked on the Jews are pure and simple inventions. The writer has taken an active part in the entire revolution, and during its course he has visited the Jewish quarters of Berlin and Hamburg, but he has never witnessed a single case of violence against the Jews. All the acts of the Nazis were of a purely moral character. The deeper psychological purpose of this vile propaganda about the so-called atrocities against the Jews has been fully understood by the Italian press—it is of a purely economic nature. They want to exclude Germany from the world markets.'

Are there any naïve people left who honestly think they can leave Italian Fascism out of the picture, when they make of their struggle against Hitler an issue of liberty?

Nothing could be more baneful to the cause they desire to foster and defend. Fascism knows better, and therefore does not propose to limit to Italy alone

the propaganda and action for the triumph and consolidation of dictatorial despotism. That it intrigues with, and blows on, the smouldering fires of Balkan passions is known to everyone who knows anything of the political health of Europe. Equally recognized is the persistent meddling of Italian Fascism with Austrian politics. And its intrigues with Croatian refugees have cost it considerable expense and worry since the Marseilles attack on King Alexander of Yugoslavia—those Croats who have found hospitality in an Italy so inhospitable to its own liberal citizens!

But not all of Fascist activity is tacit and underground. There is the propaganda which by its very nature must be open and blatant. Toward the end of September 1933, the Italian press, and after it the world press, gave out the sensational news of the launching of a Fascist International sponsored by Rome. The New York *Bulletino della Sera*, a Fascist daily in the Italian language, published this news in its issue of September 21, 1933, in a correspondence purporting to come from Geneva:

‘In local political circles there is circulated a confidential Italian manifesto, which is interpreted as a move by Premier Mussolini with the intention of launching a solid *bloc* of Fascist States. While the manifesto does not mention it, it has leaked out from creditable sources that the Hungarian premier, Goemboes, Prince von Starhenberg, leader of the Austrian Fascists, and Vice-Chancellor Von Papen of Germany have undertaken the leadership of this movement in their respective nations. It is also added that Lord Rothermere has been officially approached to head a similar Fascist movement in Great

Britain. The manifesto emanates from the Central Council of the University of Rome, and is signed by its president, General Eugenio Cosulich, and by various senators and professors.'

That the blind do not see through this obscurity is both obvious and regrettable. But it is, to say the least, exasperating that these weather signs should be disregarded by the seeing persons who ought most to fear the gathering storm.

Wherever practical and favourable possibilities arise for the hunting down of Jews, Fascism—any and every Fascism—will repeat the infamies of Hitler, through the power of the lie which has given credence to the almost universal legend that Judaism and Marxism, rather than Judaism and Liberalism, are one and the same thing and have the same origin. 'That is why we repudiate,' the Swiss Fascists write in their appeal to the people, 'the gifts of the Hebraic-liberal revolutions from 1789 [*sic*] to 1931,\* in the same way that we repudiate the parliamentary democracy of the West (France).' And the exalting of Hitler pervades the entire Italian press. Giuseppi Piazza, writing in *Nuova Antologia*, April 1931, expostulates as follows:

'Europe has much more than one substantial reason—to be precise it has all those connected with the preservation and the defence of its millennial civilization—for deeply rejoicing in the fact that a great Central European country such as Germany, which was too often the channel

\* The revolutionary ferment of 1848 was very favourable to the Italian Jews. Pope Pius IX himself, then King of Rome and the Pontifical States, issued a decree which granted the Jews complete equality with all other citizens.

through which an incandescent lava poured between East and West to enliven the history of Europe, has at last submitted, after a dramatic period of uncertainty, to the Idea and Order of Rome.'

But the litany of our quotations would be too long and too trying, even to the deafest ears. If we insist on this annoying device, it is only because we like to corroborate our facts with the loud and boisterous voices of our enemies and the enemies of liberty. It is all in the very texture of this book.

Between Fascism and Nazism there was not only an exchange of loving words and amorous glances at a distance; there were also many open visits and secret trysts, such as generally take place in the natural order of things between confederates who plot and fight for the same cause against a common enemy.

We do not refer to the Hitler-Mussolini meeting in Venice in June 1934. Let us go back to April 1933, shortly after Hitler's accession, when his henchmen, Von Papen and Goering betook themselves to Rome. A few days after, the periodical *October* (April 1933), established in Rome to advocate a Fascist International, printed under the title, 'An Interview with Von Papen and Goering' the following effusion:

'Goering, speaking also for Vice-Chancellor Von Papen, felt the need of expressing to the Italian press his deepest gratitude for its stand against the campaign of defamation which was let loose in all foreign countries against Germany. To which Von Papen added: "Before everything else I desire to agree entirely with my colleague Goering in his appreciation of the loyal attitude

of the Italian press in its efforts to offset the defamatory drive against Germany outside the frontiers of our two nations." . . . Whereupon Goering rejoined once more: "I consider these expressions of friendship as a sure token of the intimate relations and bonds which exist between our countries, which are not only of an economic nature, but also and especially of a theoretical character. For the Duce has said that Nazism and Fascism spring from the same common root. Fascism and Nazism share the same doctrine, aim at the same ends, and have the same enemies." Then Goering expressed once more his amity for, and his deep gratitude to, the Italian press, to the people of Italy, to its government, and especially to the Duce.'

If the Berlin underlings went in unholy pilgrimage to Rome, why should not the Roman underlings have returned the visit? Of course they did. Soon after, the congress of Nuremberg came along, designed to celebrate Hitler's big victory. The illustrated periodicals of Germany are full of rotogravures showing the exchange of ceremonies between Hitler's representatives and Mussolini's emissaries. The Italian press in America, save of course the anti-Fascist journals, went into ecstasies of delight over 'the enthusiasm with which the envoy of the Duce was acclaimed at the Nazi congress.'\* But we would rather quote from the press of Italy. *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan) reports from Berlin, September 2, 1933:

'Hess ends his speech by hailing the representatives of Italian Fascism, and in the name of

\* *Corriere d'America*, November 1, 1933.

the Brown Shirts, swears fealty to the Duce who never vacillated in the years of doubt and struggle. . . . As soon as the Vice-Secretary of the Italian Fascist party, Professor Marpicati, takes the platform, a tremendous and prolonged ovation greets him from all sides of the huge hall. The assemblage cries out, "Long Live Mussolini!" "Long live Italy and Fascism!" And thousands of right arms shoot up in the Roman salute. As soon as silence is restored Professor Marpicati begins his address: "I wish to thank above all and most deeply Herr Hess, a worthy and valiant representative of Hitler in the council of the National Socialist party, for his cordial welcome extended to the delegation of the Black Shirts. In the name and by the order of the Honourable Starace (secretary to the Italian Fascist party) I bring here to Hitler, leader of the Brown Shirts, the greetings of Mussolini, Duce of Fascism. I hereby express my most fervent wish that this great gathering of the Nazis may prove a new milestone on the roadway to the triumph of the Fascist ideal throughout the world." And he ended with the shout: "Long live Hitler and Mussolini!"

It is quite unnecessary to add that this was not an empty exchange of diplomatic courtesies, since the scene was a Fascist congress, and not a conference of diplomats. And that neither was it a question of unofficial comradeship between two political parties; since both parties were then in power, and all the speakers had been sent there by their respective governments.

Certainly in the diplomatic boxes of the Nuremberg

hall there sat as spectators all the accredited foreign envoys; but on the speakers' platform, commingling Nazism and Fascism in one loving embrace, there was only one non-German performer, the *nuncio* of Mussolini—this Cæsar whose only war trophies are the black bread and sullen silence of the workers and peasants of his own country.

Cæsar? Let us see.

I have been reading of late a book by an unimpeachable author—Napoleon III's essay on the conqueror of Gaul. Wading through a lot of trash I have been rewarded by this unexpected comment on one of Cæsar's predecessors, Silla himself, who in warlike deeds was far above the lance-corporal Mussolini: 'Silla restored to the upper classes their prerogatives without restoring their ancient prestige. Having made use of the corrupt elements of the populace and having appealed solely to their sordid passions, he left behind him only a short-sighted oligarchy and a deeply-divided people.'\*

I beg forgiveness of the shade of Silla and of his living heirs for mentioning his name in connection with Mussolini and Hitler.

\* *Histoire de Jules César*, Volume II, page 275.









